The new edition of Best of Film Print 2012 is being launched at the Berlinale, in the cold-but exceptionally film-friendly-city of Berlin. This marks the beginning of another year of extraordinary film premieres, exciting discoveries of international talent, great achievements and sometimes disappointing set-backs-but most significantly it has been a year confirming a genuine and constant love for world cinema!

2012 was a special year in Georgian film history – a year marking the revival of Georgian cinema, the emergence of young talent and the clear recognition and commitment to new policies which will lead to the development of the film industry in our country. We proved this year that film is not just a flickering and fading light from our cultural past, but a sector that is reviving and promising a bright future.

Following more than a decade of near-stagnation that started in the 1990s, we have worked hard over the past three years to achieve results that we can take pride in: up to 20 films were produced and shot in Georgia; up to ten projects were developed through public funding; three films received/won Eurimages support; and our film retrospective programmes travelled to more than 15 countries.

We have hosted official visits by high profile international film executives from Eurimages, Berlinale FF, Semaine de la Critique Section of Cannes FF, Locarno FF, Sarajevo FF, representatives and others.

The most significant achievement for 2012, however, is that Georgia has entered the wider map of the international film family. Georgian filmmakers are striving for global recognition, and our international colleagues are keen and supportive of this process.

That achievement is the main focus of this edition – to deliver our new story. To tell you more about our accomplishments over the last year, tell about the international premieres of new Georgian films, show the creative visions of young Georgian filmmakers, and offer reviews of recent films and interviews with established Georgian talent. We have also captured the words and ideas of foreign professionals who have been the first to support our industry's efforts at development in 2012. You'll meet and hear your colleagues who have already discovered Georgia as a film-friendly country!

We took risks in our journey to discover talent, and we will continue to give chances to others who support the future of Georgian films. In our Best of FilmPrint 2012 you will meet some of the people who have inspired us, some who we support, and others who are creating the identity of Georgian cinema.

Thank you for reading our first English-language magazine,
Best of Film Print 2012!

Tamara Tatishvili / Director of Georgian National Film Centre
Natia Kanteladze / Executive Manager of Film Print Magazine

Photo: Maka Kukulava

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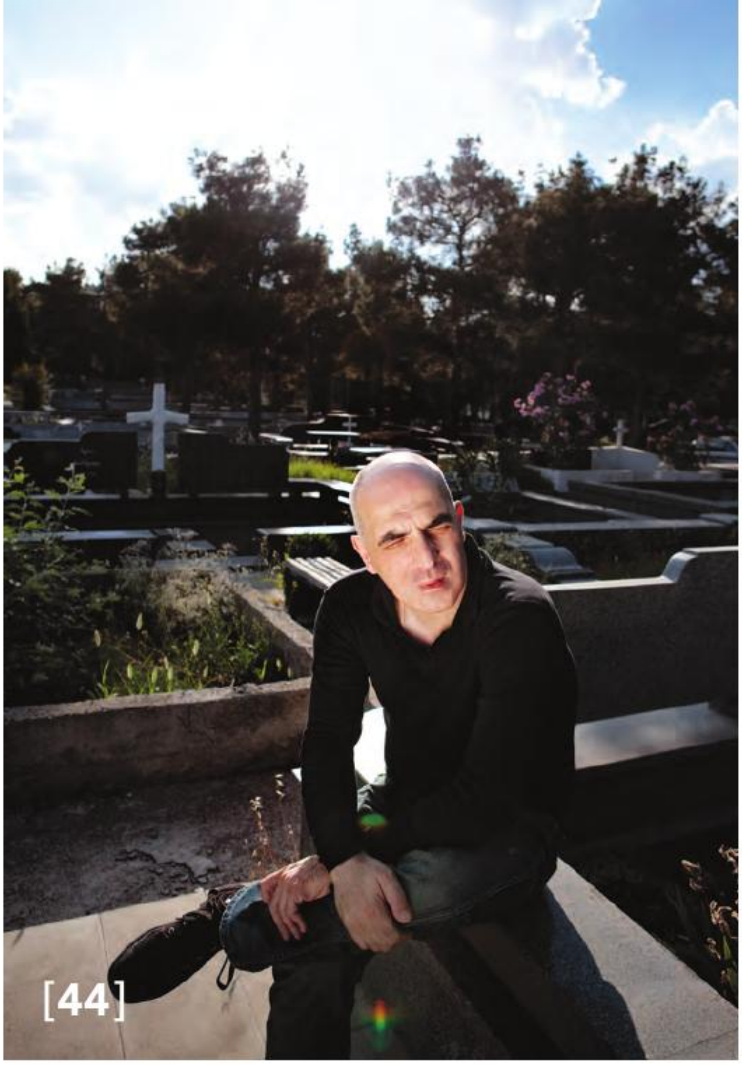

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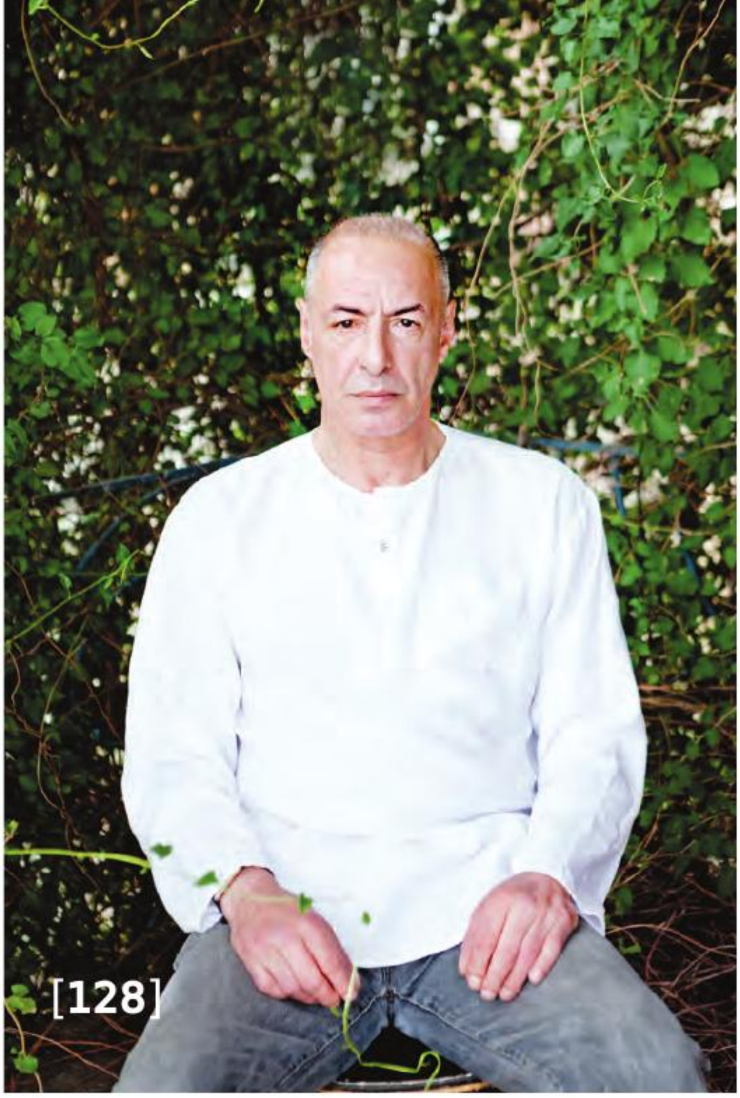

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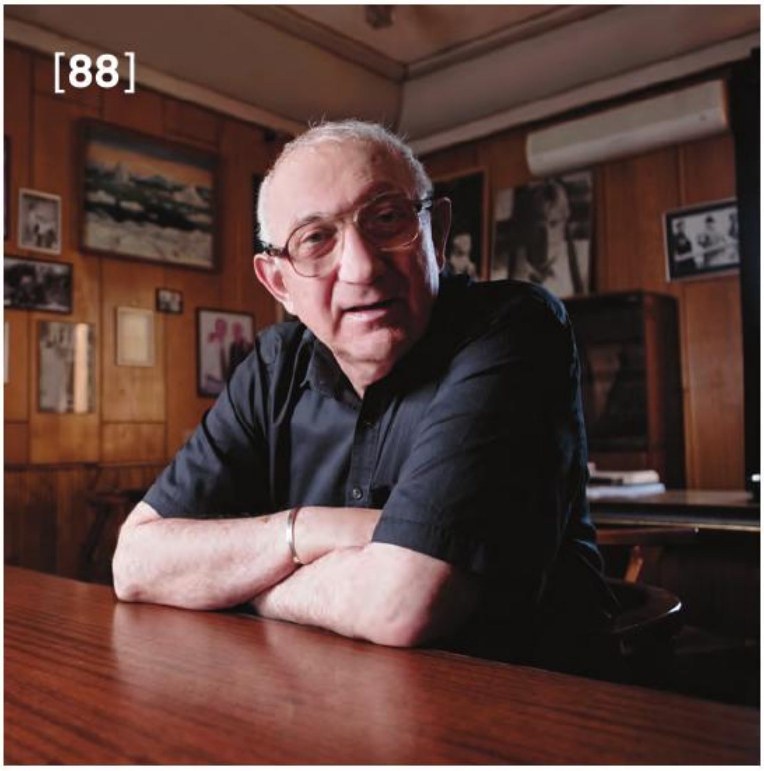

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Berlinale

62
Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Der Beauftragte der Bundesregierung
für Kultur und Medien
9–19 FEB 2012
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Berlinale 62

The Marketing side of the Festival >> Mariam Kandelaki

In 2012 the Red Carpet was rolled out – for the 62nd time – in the lobby of the main hall of Berlin Film Festival. The jury was chaired by Mike Leigh and included famous directors and actors like Francois Ozon, Asghar Farhadi, Barbara Sukowa, Charlotte Gainsbourg and other professionals.

The Jury awarded the main prize, the Golden Bear for the Best Film, to Italian directors Paolo and Vittorio Taviani for their extremely exciting work called Caesar Must Die. This feature-length documentary film was shot in a prison for criminals who have committed extremely severe crimes. In the film, William Shakespeare's famous tragedy Julius Caesar is staged in the prison. A murderer turns into Caesar, and the audience enters the world of Shakespeare. This film showed once again how Shakespeare's world remains modern, endless and eternal. The Silver Bear award went to a young Hungarian director, Benedek Fliegauf, for Just the Wind, a story is based on real events – a series of murders in a gypsy-populated village in Hungary in 2008-2009. The characters of the film are gypsies who, despite the difficulty of their situation, try and save themselves. The Honorary Golden Bear was awarded to American actress Meryl Streep.

Much more can be said about Berlinale 62, but I would like to focus on the film market and trade fair held within the framework of the festival.

Parallel to the Festival, a European Film Market is organized each year. In 2012 it lasted from February 9 to February 17. This trade fair plays an important role in the calendar of the world film industry. This year about 7000 professionals participated in the film market, out of which 1500 persons and companies showed interest in buying films. Fifty-four countries were represented by 400 stands. The film market is held in two buildings – Martin Gropius Bau and the Marriott Hotel. Thirty-nine cinemas in the city show films that are represented at the market. Only accredited producers and film professionals are allowed to attend.

The Berlinale Film Market aims to sell films, present new projects and organize negotiations for projects. This is a place where professional producers make deals, while film professionals meet distributors and representatives of various media channels. Film funds and other film festivals organize presentations. Young producers, directors and students of film schools also have an opportunity to establish direct contacts with TV channels and pitch their finished films or projects.

On February 10-12 debates were held in order to discuss the challenging issues related to film industry, e.g. how to take advantage of the internet in financing, how to spread films via internet, how to combine traditional financing with the financing obtained via internet.

On February 11-14 documentary filmmakers had an opportunity to attend MeetDocs gatherings jointly held by the Berlinale Film Market and the European Documentary Network. During these meetings the leading distribution companies of documentary films presented their objectives and underlined what kind of films they are interested in. The directors of famous documentary film festivals spoke about the specifics, work-style and programs of their festivals.

On February 12-14 the Berlinale Coproduction Market was held for the 9th time. For two days producers, sales agents, representatives of TV channels and film funds from 450 countries met and negotiated joint projects.

In 2001, having won the Nipkov Program Scholarship, I attended the Berlin Film Festival and film market for the first time. I remember meeting my friend, a German producer, who answered my question on which films he'd seen, saying, "I haven't seen any of the films and I hope to see some at the closing ceremony". I was surprised how a producer managed not to see a single film during 10 days of the festival! Personally I watched four or five films a day. For me, a newcomer from Georgia, such a large-scale festival

Representative of Slovak Film Institute Alexandra Strelkova; Mariam Kandelaki, Tamara Tatishvili and Salome Sepashvili; Nicholas Rurua and Festival guests; David Vashadze

was extremely exciting. I wondered how directors from other countries created films and what their main themes were. At that time I thought it was natural for producers to watch films during festivals, too. I was unaware that the main work of a film producer is business and a major focus is on money, though of course there are producers very interested in the artistic side of films as well.

Eleven years have passed since my first visit to the Berlinale. During these years I have come to understand more about the Western film industry. Now I am not surprised when producers are engaged in business negotiations and have no time to watch films. Personally I managed to watch only three films at this year's Berlinale, as I was busy at the Georgian stand presented by GNFC at the film market.

Compared to past years, this year interest in Georgia and the country's film industry was much greater. It was the first large-scale international festival in which Georgia was represented as a member of Eurimages, the European Council Film Support Foundation.

The delegation from GNFC was led by its Director, Tamar Tatishvili, Deputy Director, Salome Sepashvili and the Head of the Exports and Distribution Department, Davit Vashadze. The Georgian delegation at the Berlinale included a film director, Nana Janelidze, General Director of Tbilisi International Festival, Gaga Chkheidze, and the Director of the Tbilisi International Festival, Nino Anjaparidze. Other attendees included film directors Otar Shamatava and Zaza Buadze, as well as producers Vladimer Kacharava and Lasha Khalvashi.

Salome Jashi with her short documentary film Swimming participated in the multimedia documentary film project 15 Youth by Youth, the presentation and premiere of which was held at the Berlinale. This was a series of short films dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Directors from Armenia, Belarus, Lithuania, Estonia, Russia and other post-Soviet states also participated in the project. A young director Lasha Tskvitinidze took part in Berlinale Talent Campus, and Robert Bosch Stiftung nominees -young producer Natia Guliashvili and director Nino Gogua – participated in the forum of the German Foundation.

Georgian film critics also attended the festival in Berlin. Several Georgian TV channels and representatives of the news media informed Georgian spectators and

Otar Shamatava with Ukrainian and German co-producers; Mariam Kandelaki; Zaza Buadze with festival guests; Mariam Kandelaki, Tamara Tatishvili, Salome Sepashvili and Vladimer Kacharava

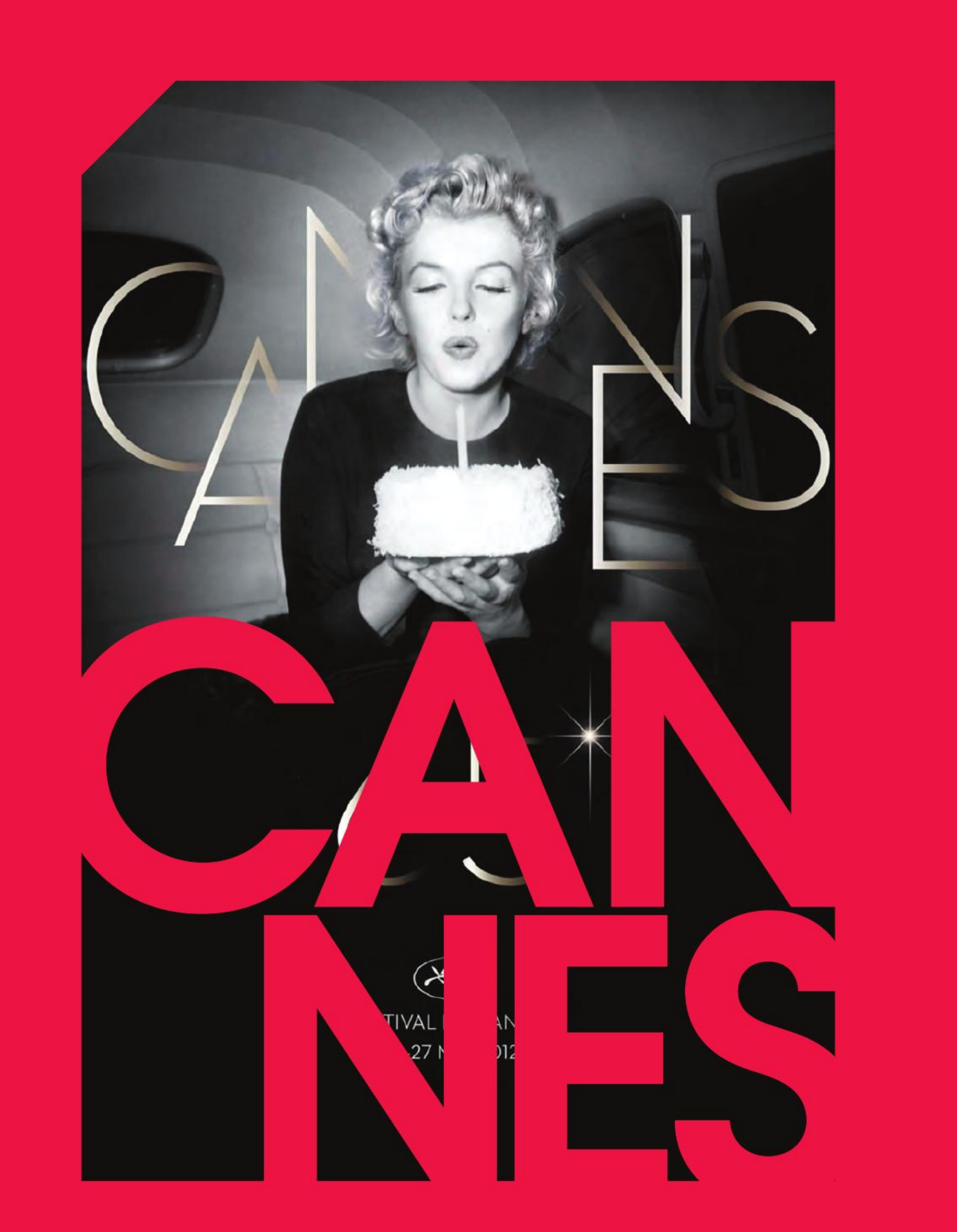
readers about the events of the Festival.

On February 9-16 more than 50 business meetings were scheduled at the Georgian stand. In addition to this representatives of various film festivals came to the stand every day to look at the catalogues and trailers of recent Georgian films. Among them were representatives of film festivals from Italy, Mexico, Portugal, Czech Republic, Germany, Japan, France, Canada, Korea and Holland who select films for festival programs. In past years the Georgian delegation searched for festivals and offered Georgian films. This year the representatives of the festivals came to them. There was great interest in the exotic Georgian landscapes, nature and locations. Some were interested in cooperation. There were offers for producing, shooting and coproducing European films in Georgia. Some negotiations on joint projects were successful and foreign directors will come to Georgia and cooperate with Georgian crews and actors.

Representatives of various training programs also visited the Georgian stand and trainings were planned with regard to feature, documentary and animation filmmaking. GNFC received invitations from the festival markets of other countries and they met with the directors of the Berlin Film Festival, the European Film Academy (EFA), European Film Promotion (EFP) and other important organizations. The Georgian National Film Center is making significant efforts to represent Georgia as an important participant in the world film industry.

In addition to GNFC meetings at the Georgian pavilion, Georgian filmmakers in Berlin had other opportunities to meet foreign producers and distributors and negotiate their future projects. On February 13, with the support of the Georgian Embassy in Germany, a reception and presentation of the Georgian stand were held at the Georgian pavilion. Among the guests of the reception was the Georgian Minister of Culture and Protection of Monuments Nikoloz Rurua and the Georgian Ambassador to Germany, Gabriela von Habsburg. Numerous representatives of the world film industry attended the presentation of the Georgian stand.

The success of the Georgian pavilion at the Berlinale proves there is an increasing interest in the Georgian film industry. We hope the interest of foreign colleagues will continue to increase, and more high-quality Georgian films and projects will be presented at festivals around the world. ●


CAN
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The 65th Cannes Film Festival

>> Archil Shubashvili

The genuine star of the 65th film festival in Cannes was Marilyn Monroe. Her black and white photo from the 1950s where she is blowing out the candles on her birthday cake was the official poster of this year's Festival. A special respect for Marilyn has always been noticeable in Cannes and for several years a huge banner with her likeness has overlooked the city center. A beautiful photo of the world famous sex symbol adorned the Festival Palace and the entire city. Cannes made the right choice: after almost 50 years since her death, Marilyn Monroe still remains the most attractive and glamorous figure in cinema.

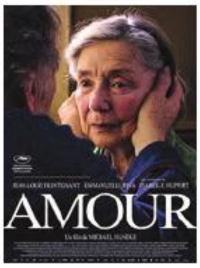
Probably every filmmaker dreams of presenting his work at the Cannes Festival, whether in the main competition or in another program. Today one of the most popular programs of the Festival is Special Vision, which collects films with unique styles and original themes.

The opening ceremony of the 65th Festival was presented by Berenice Bejo, who plays in this year's Oscar-winning film The Artist. In the Grand Hall des Lumieres she presented the Chair of the Jury, Italian director Nanni Moreti and other members of the Jury, which included fashion designer Jean-Paul Gauthier, British actor Evan McGregor, German film star Diane Kruger, American director Alexander Payne and French actress Emmanuelle Devos.

Film critics agreed that the organizers made a good choice for the opening film from American director Wes Anderson, Moonrise Kingdom. The film is a sort of fairytale about the love of twelve-year-old abandoned children. It was appreciated by enthusiasts of both author's and mainstream films. The actors in the film attended the opening ceremony – Bruce Willis, Edward Norton, Tilda Swinton and Bill Murray.

The Grand Prix of the festival, the Palme d'Or has been won twice by only a few directors, including Francis Ford Coppola (USA), Shohei Imamura (Japan), Emir Kusturica (Serbia), Bille August (Denmark) and brothers Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne (Belgium). This year Austrian director Michael Haneke

Jury of the main competition, Michael Haneke's film "Amour", Ken Loach's film "The Angels' Share", Thomas Vinterberg's film "The Hunt", Best Actor Mads Mikkelsen



was awarded his second Palme d'Or. In 2009 he received this prize for the first time for his film White Ribbon, and this time for Amour. This new film tells about the lifelong love of a couple.

The Italian film director Nanni Moreti, this year's President of the Jury, always proposes ambitious films, sometimes on the borderline of being pretentious. He plays the main roles in his own films, which some find narcissitic. Thus I awaited the jury's verdict with some trepidation.

Fortunately the Jury awarded the main prize to Amour, the most remarkable film in the competition. It is impossible to remain calm watching this film even though the action mainly takes place in the Paris apartment of an elderly couple who are musicians. Their apartment is the environment that unites the episodes of their joint life, fragments of divine music, memories of the past, the silent and inevitable flow of time, the daily routine filled with love and respect, sudden illness, painful and frightening days, nightmares, sacrifice, the sense of complete physical and spiritual crisis and an inevitable end – death in the name of love. Haneke has made a film about love that is not melodramatic, but portrays the inevitable end of love and life, showing how love dies along with those who carry this feeling in their hearts. The main roles are performed by stars of French cinema Jean-Louis Trintignant and Emmanuelle Riva. Their daughter is performed by Haneke's favorite actress, Isabelle Huppert.

As fans of film statistics have calculated, the most active participant of the Cannes festival has been the most outstanding representative of English social cinema, Ken Loach. He presented his 11th film in Cannes this year. Loach has been awarded numerous prizes, including the Palme d'Or in 2006 for his film The Wind That Shakes the Barley. This year's competition film The Angel's Share focuses on the life of ordinary people and tells about a young man from Glasgow who has to make a choice between his criminal past and a peaceful honest life with his family. The film has a happy end – and Ken Loach too, could count on another prize, the Special Prize of the Jury for his work.

A real sensation at the Cannes festival in 2007 was the Romanian Cristian Mungiu's film 4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days, for which he received the Palme d'Or. The world has discussed the phenomenon of Romanian cinema at length and Mungiu has played an important role in the development of it. This year he participated with Beyond the Hills, which takes place in an Orthodox Christian monastery in one of the provinces of Romania. A girl named Alina visits her friend who she grew up with in an

orphanage. The Superior of the Monastery and other nuns try to lead the girl in the direction of truth and faith, however Alina's vision of the world is different. In protest against against the rules of the convent, Alina behaves differently, and the nuns decide there is a demon in the girl. They exorcise her, tying her up and depriving her of food in order to weaken the devil, however Alina dies of starvation. The director thus expresses his aversion to any type of violence – even that committed in the name of God. He stated, "This is a film about the brutal mistakes people make in the name of faith". This film led in the ratings published daily in Festival journals, and the Jury awarded it the prize for Best Script. Beyond the Hills won other prizes too – Kristina Fluter and Cosmina Stratan were both awarded Best Actress (In fact this year's festival was not abundant in outstanding female roles).

The famous Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami was awarded the Palme d'Or in 1997 for Taste of Cherry. Over time, Kiarostami's style has become more European though it has not diminished his creative work. This was evident in his film Certified Copy shot in Italy and shown at the Cannes Festival two years ago. This year too, with Like Someone in Love , shot in Japan, the director portrays the relations between a lonely old man and a young prostitute.

Italian director Matteo Garrone participated in the festival with his tragic comedy called Reality. The main character of the film is Luciano, an ordinary resident of Naples who sells fish but dream of participating in a reality show. Gradually the wish turns into an obsession and, from a good family man he turns into a paranoiac. He suspects that the organizers of the show are constantly watching him to get better acquainted with his life and invite him to the show. Finally, Luciano is disappointed-although his dream partly comes true. The principal actor, Aniello Arena from Naples, was sentenced twenty years ago to a life sentence for acts he carried out within the Napolitan mafia. However, Italian law allows such prisoners to temporarily leave jail for short periods and on good behavior, although Arena is not allowed to travel outside of Italy. He had been discovered by Garrone, as Aniello had studied theater in the Volterra prison. He was thus temporarily released—though he returned to prison each night-to participate in making this film. The film was awarded the Grand Prix of the Jury.

Films in the competition included Hunting by Danish director Thomas Vinterberg. According to Vinterberg, "This is a film about how deceit can turn into truth if everyone believes it". The film depicts the life of a young male kinder-

garten teacher who is unjustly accused of pedophilia, and how it changes his life. He is accused by the police, his reputation is spoiled and nobody wants to speak to him. He has to deal with the problem alone, and the only person who supports him is his son. Finally human relations prevail and the truth comes out. The main character is performed by Danish actor Mads Mikkelsen, who was awarded Best Actor. Hunting was also awarded the prize of the Ecumenical Jury.

French audiences always look forward to the French competition program in Cannes, although French films have not been frequent winners of the festival. In 2008 the Palme d'Or was won by Lauren Cantet's film The Class, after a 22-year interval without awards for French movies. However, the film was not very impressive and hardly anyone remembers it today. This year, the patriarch of French cinema, 90-year-old Alain Resnais, presented his film You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet!. This film again confirms Resnais' solid cinematograhic culture and his attraction for vaudeville and boulevard theater. Although he is a living classic who has brought new vision to cinema with his films Hirosima, Mon Amour (1959) and Last Year in Marienbad (1961), some critics believed the new film shows his time in cinema has passed.

The opinions of the critics were split over Jacques Audiard's Rust and Bone. Some disliked the film while others considered it a candidate for the Palme d'Or. The actors Marion Cotillard and Matthias Schoenaerts depicted the melodramatic story in a convincing way. This genre was quite unexpected from this outstanding master of French author's films.

Leo Carax's mystery, Holy Motors , is an absurd yet logically constructed cinematographic attraction that might have won any prize at the festival if the jury had consisted of other members. I think this film should be seen by all movie aficionados as it proves that cinema can move to a totally new aesthetic space and physical reality. The cast is very well-selected and includes Denis Lavant, Kylie Minogue, Eva Mendes and Michel Piccoli.

The most scandalous film in the competition was Paradise: Love by Austrian director Ulrich Seidl, which is a protest against sex-tourism. Part of the audience thought the film contained excessively explicit scenes, while others considered that sex scenes added artistic value and credibility to the film. Paradise: Love deals with a middle-aged single woman who travels to Kenya to celebrate her birthday, and there she can obtain sexual services of young black locals. The woman hopes this journey will fill her emptiness and bring new emotions. She is disappointed, realizing that Africans view rich European ladies only as a source of income.

The Jury's Choice Best Direction award was unexpectedly given to Mexican author Carlos Reygadas' Silent Light. The international press immediately criticized this "unusual misunderstanding" mainly because the visuals included a deformed screen, frames out of focus and endless flashbacks that recalled experimental genres. Including this film in the Cannes Festival was surprising to many. The director tried hard to make everything mysterious—and from the subject line the audience can only guess that the main characters are a married couple who move to a village from the city and try to adjust to their new surroundings. The small group of admirers of Reygadas called the film an example of "expressionism" in which the atmosphere is filled with the expectation of death and destruction. The situation is aggravated by the cold, transparent fragments of village life, filled with an unnatural flow of light. Probably all this is part of aesthetics known in Latin American art as "Magic Realism". The Jury paid attention to the formal side of the film, and Reygadas himself addressed the audience saying, "I would like to express my gratitude to the Festival which has treated my film with understanding. I also would like to thank the audience who watched the film to the end, and the journalists who tortured me for three days…"

The USA was well-represented with five films in the main competition, outnumbering all other countries. Even though each film was highly professional, none was seen as a candidate for any award. Films shown included a wonderful ensemble of actors in Killing Them Softly, by an Australian director, Andrew Dominik. The main role is performed by Brad Pitt. Another director of Australian origin, John Hillcoat, presented his film Lawless which portrays the brutal atmosphere of the Prohibition years in the 1930s.

Audience and critics alike appreciated Mud, by 34-year-old Jeff Nichols. This director was the youngest of the competition and his film was projected on the last day of the Festival. Mud is an exciting story about teenagers who face adult problems; the main role is performed by young actor Tye Sheridan who was familiar to Cannes audiences from Terence Malick's film Tree of Life. The kind adults are performed by Hollywood stars Matthew McConaugh and Reese Witherspoon. Finally, Nicole Kidman's performance in Lee Daniels' Paperboy was brilliant, and the film also featured Matthew McConaugh, John Cusack, Zac Efron and Macy Gray. Nicole Kidman stepped onto the red carpet for the second time during the projection of a biographical film by Philip Kaufman, Hemingway and Gellhom where she plays Hemingway's beloved. Her partner is Clive Owen. The fact that American films didn't receive any awards can perhaps be explained in part by the well-known negative position of the Jury Chair, Nanni Moretti, towards American films.

A famous Canadian director David Cronenberg participated in the competition with his recent film Cosmopolis. The main character of the film is a young billionaire who falls victim to the capitalist system. The protagonist develops mental disorders as he learns his decisions may cause him to go bankrupt in a few hours, and according to his bodyguard, his life is also in danger. The action mostly takes place in a limousine where the main character talks to his friends. The friends notice that the billionaire is detached from

reality and is watching the world only through the window of his limousine. Robert Pattinson plays the main character. As an actor, with the help of David Cronenberg, he made a successful transformation from vampires to author's films.

The audience also liked Sergey Losnitsa's In the Fog based on Vasil Bikov's literary source. The author tells about the hard fate of Belarussian partisans and is the tragedy of people who have to make a choice between life and death, committing treason and saving one's life. The film was awarded the Fipresci Prize by the International Association of Film Critics.

The audiences in Cannes looked forward to a new film by a Brazilian filmmaker, Walter Salles. On the Road is based on the famous 1950s novel by Jack Kerouac, but despite the convincing acting and appealing plot situated in the bohemian circles of the USA and Mexico in the 50s, the film was too traditional for most spectators' taste. The actors are Garrett Hedlund, Sam Riley (who performs the main character in Gela Babluani's film 13), Kristen Stewart, Kirsten Dunst, Viggo Mortensen and Amy Adams.

Bernardo Bertolucci's European classic You and Me was shown "hors de concours" and differs from his earlier work. It is a story of a brother and sister who are not close, although later, due to a strange occurrence, they discover they have much in common and start to take care of each other. Bertolucci offered the audience a film filled with pure, transparent human feelings. Fortunately, unlike some of his other films, You and Me is devoid of evils such as incest. The director attended the premiere in a wheelchair and was met with prolonged applause.

A main event of the Festival was the presentation of the second part of the Festival's honorary President Gilles Jacob's project "Everyone Has His Cinema". The presentation was held at Debussy Hall where admirers remembered Jacob's speech at the 60th anniversary of the Cannes Festival in 2007. He addressed 35 leading directors of the world with a request to make a 3-4 minute film on the theme of cinema. Five years later Jacob invited his favorite directors again and presented a film about how the project was carried out. Unfortunately, not all the directors managed to be present and two marvelous directors – Theo Angelopoulos and Raul Ruiz – have passed away. However, it was exciting to see 18 great "legends of contemporary cinema" on stage together. Today film directors are often as popular as film stars. Most important was the idea – the project "Everyone Has His Cinema" refers to both directors and audiences.

The closing film of the festival was Thérèse Desqueyroux, directed by the French director Claude Miller who recently passed away. It is based on the literary work of François Mauriac. The role of the strong and severe Thérèse is performed by Audrey Tautou, who cannot adjust to the peaceful family routine and aspires to acute sensations and freedom.

The closing ceremony was led by this favorite French actress, Audrey Tautou, and American actor Adrien Brody. Like most other days, the last day was rainy and the weather affected both the film stars, who were dressed to be seen on the red carpet, and the audiences who had to queue for hours to see their chosen films. However, rain and other unpleasant moments were soon forgotten by all the participants of the 65th Cannes Festival – yet they are certain to remember the brilliant competition program and its crowning treasure – Michael Haneke's Amour.

Georgian National Film Center

Georgia at the Film Market (Marche du Film) at the 65th Cannes Film Festival

This year, for the fifth time, the Georgian National Film Center was represented at the Film Market with a pavilion. Georgian filmmakers participated in several industry sessions within the Cannes Festival. Levan Koguashvili, Zura Maghalashvili, Rusudan Glurjidze and Tinatin Kajrishvili took part in the film market. For the first time, as a result of cooperation between Producers Network, European Film Promotion and GNFC, the Georgian producer Vladimir Kacharava was nominated for the program Producers on the Move with his film project Twenty Steps Underground.

On May 18, the Georgian pavilion in Cannes gave a Happy Hour reception to promote Georgia and the national film industry. The event was attended by representatives of the film centers of Estonia, Croatia, Lithuania and Slovakia, as well as European producers and delegates of films festivals and coproduction forums.

The meetings organized by GNFC in Cannes helped build contacts with the international festivals of Berlin, Locarno, Montreal and Sarajevo. As a result of a meeting between Eric Garandeau, the President of the French Film Center, and Tamar Tatishvili, Director of GNFC, it was agreed to update the bilateral agreement on film co-production between France and Georgia. Details of the agreement will be finalized by the end of 2012. Negotiations were also held with the leadership of the European Film Academy and as a result, Georgia will host the meeting of the Governing Board of the Academy in 2013.

Meetings with foreign producers were also held. Some expressed their interest in filming in Georgia. The number of production companies interested in shooting films in Georgia has grown each year and several projects are planned for 2013/2014.

GNFC representatives also met the Head of Cannes' Semaine de la Critique (Film Critics Week), Remi Bonhomme. It was decided to hold a Film Critics Week in Tbilisi which includes film projections and master-classes. In Tbilisi the Film Critics Week was held for the first time in September 2012.

Georgians in Wiesbaden at the goEast Festival

>> Nana Janelidze

The "goEast" Festival has been held in Wiesbaden for the last twelve years. The name reminds us of Western Europe's permanent interest in the Eastern part of the continent. Wiesbaden – the capital of the Hessen region – has huge parks, blossoming cherry trees, large silent villas on the mountains, Gothic church domes and clear, transparent air. What kind of festival is "goEast"? Why is Germany interested in films created in Eastern Europe and post-Soviet states?

The historic events of the past two decades have changed the political and social situation in Europe. The patron of the goEast Festival, Hilmar Hoffman said, "The world is entangled in riots and the mess caused by globalizsation. We have to get better acquainted with Eastern Europe, a region that is also vulnerable to this explosion. Our festival is a forum for thematic and aesthetic discourse. It should enhance our knowledge about historic changes that started all over Eastern Europe in 1989."

In my opinion, goEast created its unique image gradually. It gained international recognition among filmmakers and amateurs of films who are interested in Eastern European films and the general situation in the region. Competition showings, like the opening and closing ceremonies, were held in the Kaligari Theater, a cinema built in 1910 and located in the center of Wiesbaden. For other theaters served the festival and for the first time, films were also shown in a newly-restored film museum in Frankfurt. Kaligari and its educational program have been developed as a municipal movie theater and its policy is to show program films. Audiences are offered both archive films and retrospectives of outstanding directors. Certainly, the films participating in the goEast Festival are also shown here. It's an educational center that offers high quality films, as well as information about films and directors.

Approximately 140 films were presented at the festival. Apart from the feature and documentary competition in which Nana Janelidze participated (Will There Be a Theater Up There?!), several other competitions presented their programs. This year, due to negotiations between the Georgian National Film Center and the management of the festival, a special focus was made on Georgia. Georgian films were presented in a section called Focus on Georgia that included: Salome Jashi's Bakhmaro (2011), Levan Koguashvili's Women from Georgia (2008), Rusudan Pirveli's Susa (2010), and Dato Janelidze's Deduna (1986).

The Georgian short film program included: Salome Jashi's Speechless (2009), Zaza Rusadze's Fractures and Folds (2009), Papuna Mosidze's Two Weeks Earlier (2011), Nana Ekvtimishvili's Waiting for Mother (2011), and Mariam Kandelaki's animation film The Horse of Alexander the Great (2012).

The Panorama program included Kote Mikaberidze's masterpiece My Grandmother (1929). The program Beyond Belonging included Tornike Bziava's April Chill (2010) and Sandro Kakabadze's All Day Strolling (2011). The section Beyond Belonging was organized for the second time, and this year it was dedicated to different forms of protest – from children's protest to their parents, to student protest movements against the Eastern European bloc in collapse.

The new wave of Georgian films had already been recognized at the goEast Festival. In 2006 Levan Zakareishvili's feature film Tbilisi-Tbilisi was awarded the Grand Prix. In 2010 Giorgi Ovashvili's feature film The Other Side was awarded the Grand Prix. In 2011 Levan Koguashili's Street Days was also awarded the Grand Prix, and Georgian student films were awarded five prizes within this section. This year a special Prize of the Jury was awarded to Will There Be a Theater Up There?!.

The goEast Panel was held on April 23. Georgia was represented at the Panel by filmmakers of the younger generation, including Giorgi Ovashvili, Levan Koguashvili, Rusudan Pirveli, Salome Jashi and Zaza Rusadze, as well as the Director of the Georgian National Film Center, Tamar Tatishvili. The Panel was facilitated by Screen International journalist Martin Blaney. Even though the films of all the participating directors have been awarded at various festivals, guests were interested in these new names in Georgian cinema. They wanted to know who they are, what education they have, and whether they consider themselves representative

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of Georgian cinema. They asked if they'll continue its traditions, what the difficulties are for film production, what film-making structures exist in present-day Georgia and so on. I discovered that three out of the five participant Georgian directors had European, US and Russian educations. The language of the Panel was English and was attended by collaborators from Arte TV channel, the Cottbus Festival, the Goethe Institute Head Office and Screen International. The Director of GNFC told the participants about the steps being made by GNFC to join European film institutions.

One German journalist was a bit provocative – he said that earlier Georgian cinema was developed in a Russian environment, that Georgian directors were educated in Russia and spoke Russian at international meetings. Now, he said, Russian traces in Georgian history have been forgotten and Georgians are entirely Europe-oriented. The German journalist was "bombarded" with answers by Georgians for half an hour. It was admitted that intellectual circles in Georgia still miss Russian culture, just as Russian intellectual circles miss Georgian culture and art. The peak of the discussion was a speech made by Ulrich Gregor, connoisseur of Georgian films and, in general, of world cinema. He is the founder of art house film screenings at the Arsenal movie-theater in Berlin. He said, "When we wanted to obtain a Georgian film from the Soviet "Goskino" and show it in Berlin, the bureaucrats kept grumbling, 'What do you need these Georgian films for? Take the Russian ones!' Once we even had to organize a retrospective of films about Lenin in order to obtain one Georgian film." This comment was follwed by emotional reactions and applause—and it put an end to the discussion.

For seven years goEast has offered training for young filmmakers. This year Sergei Loznitsa (whose retrospective was organized within the Portrait program) talked to young filmmakers about his films and aspects of film direction. Lectures were also given by professionals from TV channels such as ZDF, ARTE, 3sat, the Head of the Sarajevo Talent Campus and the Director of the Georgian National Film Center.

This year the fifth project market of the Festival enabled young filmmakers to meet potential producers and coproducers and pitch their projects. In case of interest, an international team is formed (obligatory), which may apply for a Robert Bosch Stiftung Coproduction Prize grant next year. This year Tornike Bziava participated in this market.

I would like to say a few words about the Robert Bosch Stiftung Coproduction Prize. The Foundation helps young professionals to develop their career. The main demand of the Foundation is to form an international team consisting of German producers and filmmakers from Eastern or Southern Europe. Thus, the goEast concept is implemented in all the events of the Festival.

Briefly about Robert Bosch: We all have washing-machines, tools, fridges and electric kettles from this company, so the name is familiar. During World War II Robert Bosch owned factories that made heavy machinery and, at the same time, assisted the Resistance Movement. He and his employees saved numerous victims of Nazism from deportation. In his will, Robert Bosch expressed a wish that- part of the profit from his industry be spent on charity. The Robert Bosch Stiftung Coproduction Prize is part of this charity. Its partners are the goEast Film Festival, Berlinale Talent Campus, the Sarajevo Talent Campus and the Sofia Film Festival. The Robert Bosch Foundation first organizes a competition in its partner countries, then selected projects participate in the training workshops within these festivals.

Last year the winners of the competition in Georgia were journalists Natia Guliashvili and Nino Gogua, with their project Madonna. This team was joined by a German producer and they attended training within the Sarajevo and Berlinale Talent Campuses. Then their project participated in goEast along with 14 other participants. The prize was awarded to a German-Armenian team with the project The Chosen Ones, however it was a valuable experience for the Georgian team. They learned project packaging, pitching, presentation, cooperation with foreign producers and developing a Georgian theme that is interesting for European audiences.

The goEast Festival also offered a symposium about the "Lenfilm" studio. A retrospective of films produced by this studio was organized, followed by a discussion about the dire state of "Lenfilm" which has nearly closed down.

Competition and non-competition films

Out of the 140 films presented at goEast, I managed to see only a few due to the Festival's busy schedule. I would like to make special mention of Vaclav Havel's film Leaving, dedicated to all current and former presidents. Vaclav Havel is a world citizen endowed with amazing courage and a sense of self-irony. The film is a surrealistic fable full of the grotesque. The theme illustrates the emotions at someone leaving a President's post – how people snatch at everything – objects, villas, their own "great" ideas, and the respect they have "earned". The female members of the president's family, including his mother, aunt, mistress and daughter, try hard to get his attention. Their daily life is based on television – they talk, live and make decisions in the presence of the TV press and the media.

Such a film could be only be made by a person who has noticed these features in himself and was brave enough to extricate himself. I had seen this film in Georgia while I studied at a political school. I had the same impression when I saw it again in Germany. At the end of the film the great playwright and inspirer of the idea of a united Europe dives out of the water, dressed in a suit with a tie, says several phrases, waves goodbye artistically and dives into the water again.

Festival winners, Salome Jashi, Zaza Rusadze, Rusudan Pirveli, Martin Blaney, Tamara Tatishvili, Giorgi Ovashvili and Levan Koguashvili

Out of all the films I saw in Wiesbaden, only Vaclav Havel's film had this unique style of narration, poetics, irony and very important theme.

Prizes

At one of the workshops, a manager of a German foundation expressed her concern: the West expects only three Ds from Eastern Europe: Drugs, Depression, Death. Eastern Europe provides these with pleasure and wins at festivals! This seems to be a festival conjuncture – that there is an intellectual circle of middle-aged directors, especially in Russian cinema, who try to depict severe, desperate, unbearable environments inhabited by two-legged creatures with snouts, and goblins with ugly mugs. These creatures communicate by murmuring, grunting and roaring. They torture, kill and offend one another. They die in complete solitude and no one knows what they have lived for. The most terrible thing is that you cannot sympathize with any film character, and nothing stirs either a smile or a tear. Watching such films, the spectator wishes for a quick end to these absurdities that are devoid of existential or creative logic.

The favorite of this year's festival was Life –by Russian director Vasili Sigariov. It was awarded the Golden Lily Grand Prix, the Fipress Prize and the rights for broadcasting throughout the Hessen region. The Chair of the Jury, Cristi Puiu, remarked at the closing ceremony, "This decision was preceded by intense discussions. Two of the five Jury members did not agree with this decision and asked to put this in the protocol (the two members were Giorgi Ovashvili from Georgia, and Yuri Meden from Slovenia). The film made me depressed with its subject line, violence, naturalism, texture and an unanswered question – what was the aim of all this? It seems the new generation of Russian directors are trying to show a world devoid of a single human being (Sergei Loznitsa's My Happiness, Alexey Mizgiriov's Convoy). One of the characters in Sigariov's film is a mother who smothers her 10-year-old son with a pillow every night. Another mother is an alcoholic who starves her child to death; a young person is killed in the underground with severe cruelty. In these worlds murder, rape and humiliation are usual... I spontaneously wish to protect Russia from directors who preach this 'truth', projecting their own spiritual disability rather than a deep knowledge of life."

The Polish director, Wojciech Smarzowski's, Rose is an epic about the tragic fate of the Mazurs. The film tells about the invasion of the Mazur lands on the border of Germany and Poland by the Germans, who force the Mazurs to forget their origins and become Germans. After World War II, the Russian and Polish Communists also drove Mazurs away from their native lands. However, this film is also a naturalistic demonstration of humiliation, rape, violence and murder.

At the closing ceremony fragments of winner films were shown. It was easy to see that all the films had similar images – monotonous textures and dull characters. I had the impression that the aspiration of Eastern European states to freedom and independence brought only barbaric socialist realism to their films.

Prizes were awarded to the following films:

Grand Prix and Fipress Prize – Vasili Sigariov's Life

In the documentary section Memory and Future the prize was awarded to Revision, a film by German director Philip Scheffner, the prize for Best Direction was awarded to Konstantin Bojanov for Ave. A special Jury prize was awarded to Nana Janelidze's Will There Be a Theater Up There?!

I would like to end by quoting the great Russian director, Andrey Tarkovsky: "Every great director is a poet. To name some of them – Dovzhenko, Fellini, Vigo, Antonioni, Bergman, Parajanov, Bunuel, Kurosawa – Real films are created by poets." ●

Diary of the Amirani Student Film Festival

>> Magda Gogolashvili

Despite the multitude of festivals today, the Tbilisi International Student Festival "Amirani" has gained fame. This is not surprising, as everything that changes is of interest…

This year, on May 6-12 , Amirani hosted the representatives of the world's leading film schools. This fifth festival was organized by the students of the Georgian University of Theater and Cinema. About 50 films were presented within the competition. The jury was comprised of celebrated filmmakers from different countries: Nana Jorjadze from Georgia, for example who is a member of the Film Academy. In 1987 she was awarded the Golden Camera Award in Cannes. Others included Andrzej Bednarek, film director and Vice Rector of the Polish National School of Cinema, Television and Theater; Jim Stark, American producer of low-budget feature films, who cooperated with Jim Jarmusch for over twenty years; Frank Albers,the Robert Bosch Stiftung Arts and Cultural Program Officer; and Australian producer,

The original Amirani Festival was established in 1978 at the initiative of Dato Janelidze, Goderdzi Chokheli, Tato Kotetishvili, Nana Janelidze, Nana Jorjadze and other famous persons working in Georgian cinema. From the beginning until the end in the 1980s, the Amirani Festival was considered one of the most innovative and free festivals of the Soviet Union. In 2007 it was revived at the initiative of the Georgian University of Theater and Cinema. The number of participating films has increased, master classes initiated and the "One Shot Movie" project began.

Day I: before the official presentation, students attended Director Nana Jorjadze's master class. She expressed opinions on various subjects and added that, alongside with Georgian National Film Center, business circles should render financial support to the development of Georgian cinema in general. In the evening Vakhtang Kotetishvili's student film Hero and Tato Kotetishvili's Watermelon (2012) were shown. The first showings of the student films of these two generations of the same family is a metaphor for the continuation of film traditions in Georgia's heritage, a step forward from black and white student films to the bright coloured short films of the 21st century.

Day II: The day started with a master class by Jim Stark, one of the greatest names in non-commercial cinema. He focused on the main idea of a film, saying "There are three important things about buying a house: location, location, location. Similarly, there are three main things to remember in making a film: the story, the story, and, once again, the story!"

Three films were the focus of the first day of the competition: Frozen Stories, EXMUN and Infernal Nuns.. EXMUN was awarded the prize for best sound direction,

Infernal Nuns was directed by Roland Petrizz and Alex Slam. We asked Neno Kavtaradze, Georgian film critic and member of the Student Jury, to explain the Jury's interest in this film.

N.K. We viewed several films. However, Infernal Nuns is not a classic short film, but takes on the form of a thriller. Sarcasm, mocking religious clichés and the courageous position of the director are skillfully woven together. The jury's decision was quite unexpected though…

The Polish film Frozen Stories made me forget I was at a Festival competition. The direction, dramaturgy, sound direction, actors and simple, natural unity of the film's components created a well-woven story. This film by Grzegorz Jaroszuk was named Best Feature Film at the festival. It showed a grotesque reality where everything is topsy-turvy, where people strive to achieve misery rather than success… They try to do this in order to participate in a TV show called "The Most Miserable Person". However, when they have nearly achieved their aim, the characters discover they dislike being lonely and humiliated. Hand in hand, they leave the cold reality…

The evening ended at the Goethe Institute where a discussion had been arranged with Andrea Wink from the Wiesbaden Film Festival and Frank Albers, program officer for the Robert Bosch Stiftung Co-Production Prize For Young German and Eastern European Filmmakers.

Day III: The third day was opened by Andrzej Bednarek's master class. He showed the students a Polish film collection "From Dawn to Dusk", created through cooperation with Polish documentary directors and students from various countries. Each series of the film reflects a day in a city's life, from dawn to dusk. The countries differ in culture and religion, lifestyle, rhythm and way of working and the days reflected embrace these differences. The Amirani Festival's goal is indeed to overcome barriers between countries.

The film showings on the third day of the Festival were divided into experimental-animation and documentary. Out of

experimental-animation films, the Jury distinguished a British film, Stanley Pikul and the Georgian Nika Mchedlidze's Walls.

For the documentary films an Israeli director, Iaki Iaijalon's Studio Varuj was awarded the prize for Best Documentary and Vakho Jajanidze's From Monday to Monday was awarded the Jury's Special Prize.

V. Jajanidze: Because of what is happening now in Georgia, there are numerous timely issues and themes to make into films. The main problem is the mentality of people here. Georgian National Film Center finances numerous projects. Students should be more motivated and show a healthy initiative. They should try to "make" films with primitive means. This year's jury is very competent and well-selected. I believe this Festival has been a success.

Participants from the French Institute in Tbilisi presented three student films from the "Femis" film school.

Day IV: The day started with master classes by Jangil Kim and Levan Koguashvili, Salome Sepashvili's presentation and the last part of film projections. Jangil Kim explained why every person is an "editor". "When we recollect things from our past, we recall the most important and memorable scenes, and this is 'editing'". He presented two Korean films focusing on the "magic" of editing.

The last part of the projections consisted of feature films. The jury awarded prizes to Adiya Imri Orr's Stitches the Australian Matt Richards' First Contact and the British Jan Pinder's Edith.

Stitches was awarded a prize for Best Direction for its original concept. First Contact was awarded a prize for the best Director of Photography and Edith won the award for Best Editing. Levan Koguashvili's master classes were preceded by a presentation by Salome Sepashvili, Deputy Director of the Georgian National Film Center.

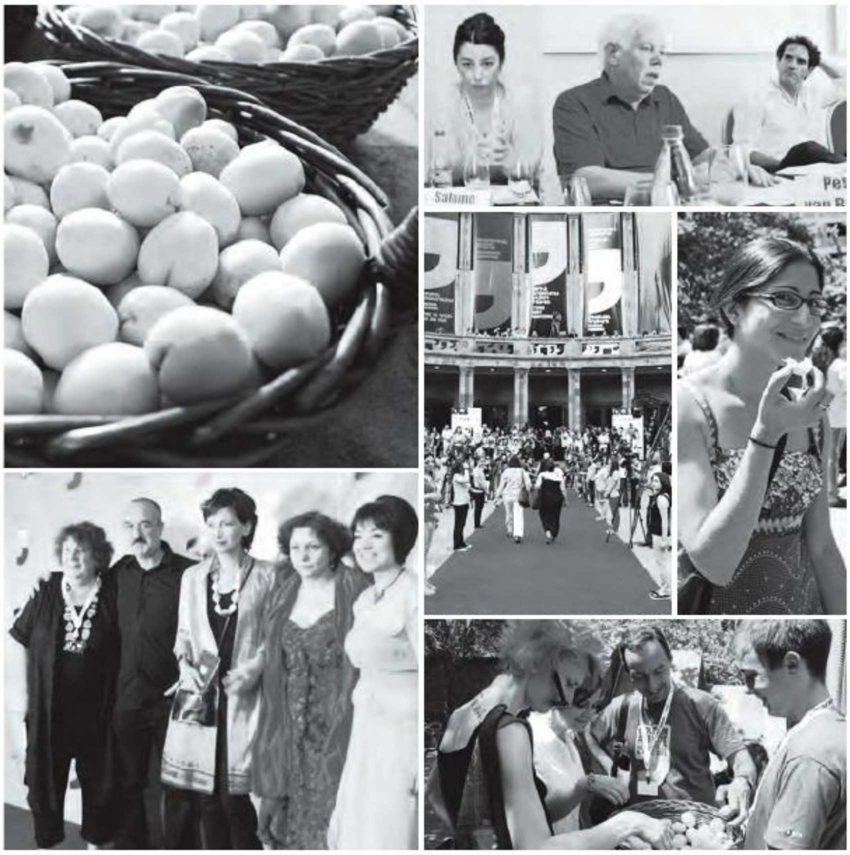
Koguashvili made the following evaluation of the festival: The number of guests proves that interest towards the Festival is great. We should achieve international standards of teaching. In certain cases, information is even more important than education. The Festival, above all, provides information. It is very important to overcome the existing vacuum, and the Amirani Festival is just the right opportunity. When the students watch their friends' films, it is a great feeling...

Day V, Closing: The day started with student work by Swiss guests Andreas Birkle and Manuel Bergeber, who offered an appealing program.

Over the entire week the students had an opportunity to express their original ideas in several minutes of continuous frame. They were divided into groups and created short sketches that were shown at the awards ceremony.

The One Shot Movie is one of the main parts of the Festival. Young Georgian and foreign filmmakers have the opportunity to create short films and find answers to questions with the help of their mentors. Unlike the master classes "One Shot Movie" is a hands-on, practical way to deepen knowledge and experience. All the volunteers and nearly all the young filmmakers participated in this program...

On the last day of the Amirani Festival I understood how much I would miss it over the next year. I participated in all the events, and the Festival helped me discover films that were much more than just students' work, which is rare.
I would like to thank the Amirani Festival for this opportunity. ●



Golden Apricot 2012

>> Magda Gogolashvili

For the last nine years the Golden Apricot Film Festival has been held in Yerevan, Armenia. This film event is the broadest in the South Caucasus and a kind of creative beginning for young filmmakers, and a necessary passage to success for experienced ones. Initially the festival focused only on Armenian films, but with time its scope has broadened and now it is an international film event.

The Golden Apricot Film Festival, held in July, 2012 included retrospectives of famous directors, trainings and master classes. The retrospectives included: Victor Erice's South, The Spirit of Beehive; Alexander Sokurov's Taurus, Faust, The Sun; as well as Eldar Shengelaya's Samanishvili's Stepmother, the Eccentrics, Unusual Exhibition, Blue Mountains or an Unbelievable Story. Guests of the Festival were Agneshka Holland (Mysterious Garden,

Europe, In the Dark) and Vadim Abdrashitov (Servant, Passenger's Play).

This year's Festival was a lucky one for Georgian filmmakers. The short films program presented Kote Chlaidze's Mirza's Birthday and the documentary program included Salome Jashi's Bakhmaro, which was awarded the Jury's special prize. One of the Jury members in the documentary section was Nana Janelidze, who was interviewed about the festival.

F.P. How do you evaluate the films selected for the festival?

N. J.: The documentary program was very interesting. The first prize was awarded to 5 Broken Cameras directed by Emad Burnat. This is a monumental film about the dramatic relations between the residents of a small Palestinian village and Israeli troops. The most emotional scenes depict the destruction of the olive gardens of the villagers. Olives are their only source of income and are as important as bread. The villagers resemble Biblical characters defending their land. Their problem is personal and global, human and universal. The director of the film is a peasant who defended his land with his camera. We should all be grateful to him. No wonder the film became the winner of the Festival!

The second prize, the Silver Apricot, was awarded to The Tundra Book: A Tale of Vukvukai, The Little Rock, directed by Alexey Vakhrushev. The film reflects the life of deer-farmers in the far North and was made with the so-called "observation method". The audience was impressed by the beautiful and severe nature of the North, the hard climatic conditions, natural calamities and the strength with which the farmers withstand everything.

The films presented at the Festival made me realize once again the importance of documentary films – they are the archives of the planet. Each film tells its own story, no matter what nationality the characters are. If a film is made in an artistic way, one feels sympathy to a seemingly alien problem.

Salome Jashi's Bakhmaro was a huge success. The irony and soft humor so characteristic of the author are evident in this film. All Jury members underlined Salome's interesting vision and original style. I am happy she was awarded the Jury's special prize. The films in the program were high quality, and Bakhmaro occupied an honorable place among them.

Directors Across Borders

For the last six years Directors Across Borders has been part of Golden Apricot. This Forum is financed by the EU within the Eastern Partnership Program and enables young talented directors to pitch their projects and obtain co-financing. The partners of the program include MAIA (Italy), INTERFILM (Turkey), Prometheus Center of Cinematographic Art (Georgia) and INTERNEWS (Armenia). Nine projects participated in this year's Forum including two Georgian projects – Keti Machavariani's Hands Up and Nana Janelidze's Other Paradise. The Jury consisted of German, French and Ukrainian producers, the Artistic Director of the Festival and the Deputy Director of the Georgian National Film Center. The winner of the Forum this year was Keti Machavariani's project, which also won the competition announced by the Georgian National Film Center.

Keti Machavariani: I first participated in this festival in 2009. When I presented my project Salt White at that time I got useful advice from professionals at the festival. They also advised me to call the film Salt White. I am very happy to participate in this year's Forum.

Along with Directors Across Borders, the Eastern Partnership Program embraces several other groups like the Armenia-Turkey Cinema Platform and Journalism Across Borders. The program enables filmmakers discuss transnational problems and international relations using the language of cinema. A vivid example of this is the Armenia-Turkey Cinema Platform, which enables Armenian and Turkish filmmakers to create joint projects. This shows how art can build bridges between nations. The Artistic Director of Golden Apricot, Susanna Harutunyan discusses these programs and the Festival in general:

SH: The aim of the Festival initially was to develop the Armenian film industry and present national films on the international arena. Initially there was only one competition - Armenian Panorama – which was naturally focusing on Armenian films. Later we understood that the desired result could not be achieved only by presenting only Armenian films andwanted to broaden the scope of the Festival. We started negotiations and opened it up to foreign filmmakers and the Festival became much more interesting and diverse.

The programs within the Eastern Partnership are especially important, including the Directors Across Borders Forum, the Armenia-Turkey Platform and Journalism Across Borders. The winners of DAB usually achieve significant success at other international festivals, for example Susa was the first Georgian project awarded the main grant of DAB. Later it was successful at numerous international film festivals. (Susa Director was Rusudan Pirveli, and script-writer: Giorgi Chalauri.)

F.P.: Please tell us about another important program - Journalism Across Borders – which is organized every year within the Eastern Partnership Program.

SH: Journalism is an inseparable part of the film industry. The criteria of evaluation change with time, however, and in order to follow the development of the film industry, young journalists must get educated and get more experience. Training enables young film journalists to enhance their knowledge and gain practical experience. The participants of this year's training were from Moldova, Belarus, Georgia and Armenia. We hope our cooperation will grow in future and someday there will be interesting joint programs as well.

Golden Apricot 2012 closed on July 15, however training and workshops for filmmakers are held periodically during the year. ●

... AND THE PRIZE GOES TO BIAFF!!!

>> Irine Zhordania

This year the Batumi Film Festival had serious competition. It was neither the Tbilisi International Film festival nor the pre-election campaign. It was just the wonderful weather, the silky sea, the streets of old Batumi and the air filled with the odour of tropical plants, a bar opened in the building of century-old drugstore, the new restaurant "Fan-Fan" housed in a fascinating building, days spent with Batumi friends, the sensation that time had stopped, new delicious meals at the Literary Café, and other many other temptations. However, the Batumi Film Festival won out over all of them.

Above all, the success of the Festival was due to a well-selected program. Over 60 feature, short and documentary films from 20 countries participated. Polish films were a special focus. On the opening day, Jerzy Hoffman's Warsaw Battle, 1920 was shown. It was the only non-authored film shown at the Festival. Polish director of photography Wojciech Staron was awarded the Best Documentary Film For The Argentinian Lesson, shot with a 16 mm camera, depicting his family's emigration to Argentina and the process of adaptation to their new environment. The winner of the short film prize was a Polish-Georgian coproduction, Tato Kotetishvili's Water-Melon. The main prize of BIAFF was awarded to Polish director and script-writer Agnieska Holland for the film In the Dark. The film depicts events during World War II when a massacre of the Jews in Nazi-occupied city of Lvov occurred. Several Jewish families hid in the underground, where for 14 months they are assisted by a pickpocket, Leopold Socha, who demands payment for saving their lives, although he plans to betray them. Socha gradually changes and becomes filled with compassion for the Jews, until finally the aim of his life is to save them. This metamorphosis is extremely compelling.

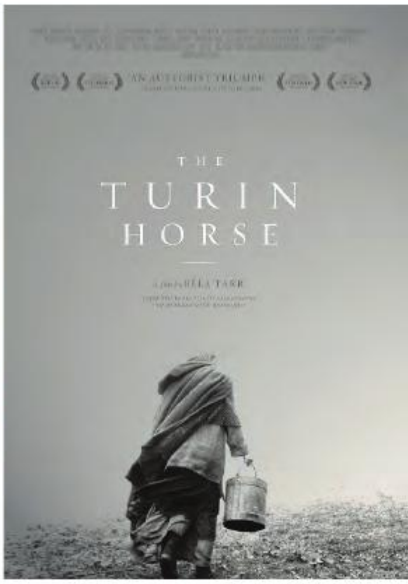
Another film dedicated to the theme of war was Sergey Loznitsa's In the Fog, about a Slavic village occupied by the Nazis. The main character is courageous and generous Sushenya, who had become accustomed to his unjust fate. Loznitsa's background as a documentary filmmaker are evident, as he attaches a greater importance to the simplicity of frames and creating a documentary-like confidence, rather than venturing into the unexpected or emotional. The film is made with marvelous taste and professionalism, and the ending is "unfairly predictable".

The audience of the Festival looked forward to the premiere of Rusudan Chkonia's film Keep Smiling. Indeed, it was outstanding for its quality direction of photography, the acting, and its mixture of drama, humor and the social-political context that went beyond the reality of one country. The main theme was illustrated by its dynamic perception and a precise rhythm and tempo.

One of the major events of the Festival was the visit of Bela Tarr and Nuri Bilge Ceylan. Film Director Nuri Bilge Ceylan has made critics discuss the phenomenon of current Turkish cinema. His films Distant, Once upon a Time in Anatolia, Climates and Three Monkeys have been sensations at authoritative festivals and have won numerous awards. His narrative style has been compared to that of Antonioni, and his films are considered a continuation of Tarkovsky. He believes that "Truth is revealed in yet unuttered words..."

Bela Tarr, a giant of authored films, noted that the creation of a film is not just shooting it – it becomes part of life. In his youth he thought "shit was social", later he thought "shit was ontological", and finally he thought "shit was cosmic". To prove this, he created Turin Horse, which is more than just a film. He says it was his final stop, and he quit filmmaking. Part of the audience and some film critics called the film a kind of "cinematographic hypnosis". Others didn't have the nerve to watch the film to the end. The same happens wherever Turin Horse is shown.

In summary, the Festival created an art-house film environment. Even the shortcomings of the Festival added a certain cheerfulness and Batumi charm. According to the Director of the Festival, Giorgi Gogiberidze, in the future more attention should be focused on the competition program. A series of master-classes should be added. The program should be diversified with Asian films too. The organizers of the Festival plan to invite representatives of the Asian film industry next year. And, of course, future Batumi Film Festivals should continue focusing on author's films. ●



Stills from the Films:
"Holy Motors",
"Once Upon a Time in Anatolia",
"The Turin Horse",
"Keep Smiling",
"In the Fog"

Cannes Film Festival's Critics Week in Tbilisi

>> Tea Chkhaidze

Film Critics Week (Semaine de la Critique) is a parallel part of the Cannes Film Festival, initiated by the French Film Critics Association in 1961 to support young directors and discover new talent worldwide. The Film Critics Week, held every year, has assisted famous directors Bernardo Bertolucci, Otar Iosseliani, Chris Marker, Philippe Garrel, Francois Ozon and many others. Since 1962 the Film Critics Week has introduced audiences to non-commercial films by new directors. Great attention is paid to the first steps made by young directors, for example their short films.

Ten full-length films are selected, out of which seven participate in the competition. Two prizes are allocated – for a short and a medium-length film. After Paris, Rome, Beirut and Lima, this year the 51st Film Critics Week was held in Tbilisi (for the first time) and in Beijing. The event was organized by GNFC with the support of the Georgian Ministry of Culture and Protection of Monuments.

Between September 15 and 21 Georgian audiences could watch the best seven films of Film Critics Week 2011-12 at the Amirani Movie-Theater. Guests of the festival in Tbilisi were Charles Thesson, Artistic Director of the Film Critics Week; Remi Bonhomme, Program Manager of Film Critics Week; Eva Ionesco, Director of My Little Princess and Geoffrey Grisson, producer of Ave. On the opening day, a press conference was held and the international guests talked about the goals and objectives of Film Critics Week, its meaning and importance. Charles Thesson noted that the French Film Critics Association had selected a film of Otar Iosseliani in 1968 even though it was disliked by the Soviet authorities at that time. It should be noted that only films selected in their native country are sent to Cannes. They underlined the fact that the Film Critics Week selection system differs from that of Cannes Festival.

Program Manager Remi Bonhomme said there were two reasons for holding the Film Critics Week in Tbilisi: first – to introduce the selected films to Georgian audiences, and second – to discover young Georgian filmmakers. Regarding the selection of films the answer was simple: a director had to show the problem for which he or she feels the most concern.

I talked to the Artistic Director of Film Critics Week, Charles Thesson regarding the event in Tbilisi.

CT: This event has been arranged thanks to Georgian National Film Center, and I am glad it is being held here. In other countries, this event is organized parallel to other film festivals. By dedicating a week solely to Film Critics Week in Tbilisi, it underlines its importance.

You teach film history and aesthetics at Sorbonne University and are in close contact with the students. Do young people have different tastes today than before?

C.T.: The tastes of old and new generations differ greatly. My generation liked to watch old films. It is necessary to know black-and-white classics. My students are interested in old films and frequently select Tarkovsky as their research topic. However, in general young people prefer American soap operas rather than films of high artistic value. Today it's possible to watch everything on the internet. When young people are shown good films, they like them; therefore it is necessary to provide a cinematographic education for them so they can appreciate quality films.

Your career started with the French film magazine Les Cahiers du Cinema.

C.T.: In 1975 I went to Paris and met Serge Daney, a French film critic who had worked for Les Cahiers du Cinema since 1964. He proposed that I write for this revue and I agreed. I was very young and a bit shy to work among celebrated film critics.

SEMAINE
DE LA CRITIQUE
CANNES

Geoffroy Grison;
Eva Ionesco, Tamara Tatishvili, Charles Tesson and Remi Bonhomme;
Tamara Tatishvili and Levan Koguashvili

Photo: Zinka Barnovi

Your first film as producer was L'Autre Nuit made in 1988.

C.T. : Yes, my first films are L'Autre Nuit and Les Ministères de L'art. Until 1986 I was engaged in distribution, and brought films to festivals from many countries, including Japan. In 1988 I became producer of L'Autre Nuit. Of course it was difficult, as it was my first attempt.

What has been the influence of technological development and globalization on filmmaking?

C.T.: Technological progress and globalization have had both positive and negative effects. It is positive that now it is easy to watch films that are made in, for example, Chile, while the negative side is that globalization is creating a kind of cinematographic ghetto.

What advice would you give to young Georgian directors?

C.T.: Certainly, the technical side is important, but the main thing is that the content and the moral of the film should be clearly defined – this is the most valuable. If a young director brings a film that is technically perfect but does not clearly reveal the theme, we can't appreciate it. Concerning second films, they should be different from the first film. Of course, again, the technical as well as the creative side have to be taken into account. I like directors who are dynamic and do not follow a set style. In order for a film to be successful, a director should do what he/she feels and say what he/she really wants to say.

Film Critics Week opened in Tbilisi with Geoffrey Nichols' Shelter, an American drama with Michael Shannon and Jessica Chesten, focusing on everyday problems, human psychology and phobias. The main character has apocalyptic dreams and hallucinations. He is afraid of his gift for foreseeing impending danger, and consults a psychotherapist. The drama shows how people are affected by the instinct of survival. This film differs from most contemporary films in that it is poised, thoughtful and mysterious, yet strong and sincere at the same time.

The second day was dedicated to the showing of 17 Filles by Delphine and Muriel Coulin, which was nominated for a Caesar as Best First Film. It is the real story of 17 girls, and the influence of the environment on youth, and what happened when they protested against their elders.

The third film of the Week was Walk Away Renee by Jonathan Caouette, who participated in this documentary himself, with his mother, Renee Leblas. The film is a protest by the director against the American doctors that treated his mother with medicines that had negative side effects. It tells of the difficulties of mental illness in America.

Another film shown during Film Critics Week was Valerie Donzelli's Declaration of War, starring Valerie Donzelli and Jeremy Elkeim. The film is a tragi-comedy, accompanied by emotional music that is both joyful and sad. The portraits of the characters are carefully drawn – the film starts in a comic way as two young people - Romeo (Jeremy Elkeim) and Juliette (Valerie Donzelli) - meet at a nightclub and fall in love. They live in harmony and happiness, and give birth to a little boy. However, a serious problem soon appears when they learn two-year-old Adam has brain cancer. Despite this severe problem, the young parents declare war on the disease and struggle to save his life. Tragic events are followed by comic scenes that neutralize any sense of depression, and the film successfully conveys a message of hope and life.

The fifth film, My Little Princess, by French actress and director Eva Ionesco, is an autobiography. The actresses in the film are twelve-year-old Anmaria Vartolomei and Isabelle Hupert. The director's mother, Irina Ionesco, was a photographer who gained fame by publishing erotic photos of her daughter. As Eva Ionesco said after the screening, her mother took scandalous photos of her when she was between four and twelve years old. The drama is dedicated to these incidents and although there are erotic photos of little Eva, the sensual photo session in the film is aesthetically done. Besides, according to the director, there are many fictitious episodes in the film. The relations between mother and child are unusual—the mother's imposing and inappropriate love, and the child's resistance.

On September 20, the sixth film was a Bulgarian film, Konstantin Bozhanov's Ave, which starred the young actors Anjela Nedialkova and Hovanes Torossyan. The visuals are extremely interesting, and according to the producer, Geoffrey Grisson, the film had an enormous success at the Festival. It illustrates the problems of many post-Soviet states, with drug abuse and economic hardships.

The last film shown during the Week was Pablo Giorgelli's drama Acacias (Argentine-Spain), a masterpiece of composition – every frame is of high artistic value. The subject line is unusual – Ruben (German de Silva) is a truck-driver who transports timber from Paraguay to Buenos Aires. One day he plans to give a lift to the daughter of his boss' housemaid. Jacinta (Hebe Duarte) meets him, carrying her five-month-old daughter. Ruben is displeased at seeing the baby, but on the way to Argentina he becomes more and more polite to mother and child. Ruben and Jacinta scarcely speak to each other, but a silent relationship of understanding develops between them.

Although the films were each very different from one another, and created with widely different visions and issues, they all had a common theme – the human being as the most unique creature of the universe. All seven films focused on individuals with their own destiny and touching story. The films confirmed the principle for the selection of films for the Film Critics Week: "A director should focus on the problem that they are most concerned by." ●

Manana Suradze, Eva Ionesco, and Shorena Tsitsagi; Tamara Tatishvili, Remi Bonhomme and Charles Tesson; Eva Ionesco, Remi Bonhomme, Geoffroy Grison and Tamara Tatishvili; Giorgi Ovashvili and Vakhtang Varazi

Photo: Zinka Barnovi

The Dangerous and Useful Liaisons of Tbilisi International Film Festival

>> Nino Razmadze

The 13th International Film Festival of Tbilisi, held December 3-9, was an event of special significance. Everyone who attended the Festival at least for two or three days will agree with me that this year's Festival was distinguished by an unusually large array of films, including those of famous directors. The halls were packed and numerous interesting guests attended.

Young filmmakers and students had the opportunity to attend a two-day masterclass given by the Hungarian classic director Istvan Szabo. The lectures were simple and easy to understand, thanks to the pedagogical talents of this great director. The audience will long remember the interesting, complete, though spontaneous answers to their questions. Istvan Szabo's "chamber" film , The Door was shown at the opening celebration. Although it was devoid of Szabo's usual brilliance, it was well-received. Szabo's masterclasses aimed to show the uniqueness of cinema and its difference from other fields of art. Since a film can show us live images, changing emotions and close-ups, they remain in the mind of the spectator as representations of the real actors. The director is just a name, but remembering a film means remembering the actors. Szabo's films are not an exception – his most famous are remembered by the brilliant acting of Klaus Maria Brandauer. After the The Door was projected, some spectators remarked that, although this film is a bit weaker than others he has made, the mark of the great director was present in the theme and style.

This year the Chairman of the International Jury was Iranian Director Mohsen Mahmalbaf. The interest of the media and the audience was great and he readily

Still from the Film "Spain", Istvan Szabo and Nino Andjaparidze, Gaga Chkheidze and Istvan Szabo, Stills from the Films "Paradise: love", "Beyond the Hills",

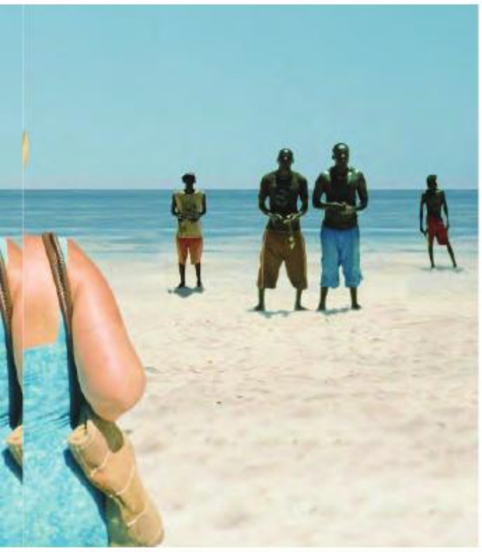


Photo: Zinka Barnovi

answered questions. He urged young filmmakers to use hand cameras and make films, even cheap and low budget ones. "The main thing is to tell the audience your story and tell it in our own way," he said. A retrospective of the Mahmalbaf family was shown through Mohsen's experimental film Salaam Cinema.

Here, a director announces a casting, and thousands of people want to be in the film but for this they have to undergo great offenses and a real interrogation. How does a man of power manipulate those who perceive his power as brilliant? Some girls who are crazy about cinema become the winners and occupy the place of the oppressive director and start torturing others. Mahmalbaf tells the participants of the casting, "You have already played in the film. This film is about your life and you have performed the roles of yourselves." During the master classes, the Iranian director often reminded the audience of this principle – a director should not be blind to the environment, he should get hold of his camera and tell the world about himself, his experience and concrete problems he sees. This is the main thing, and nothing else matters.

The audience was delighted with the film The Day I Became a Woman by Mahmalbaf's wife, Marzieh Meshkini. The film is made up of three stories about Iranian women from three generations. The main qualities of this film are its earnestness and the presentation of a universal problem. These elements are very important for each member of this legendary family of filmmakers. Meshkini was asked whether her film had been shown in Iran and what the public reaction was. She sighed, saying censorship prohibited the film. When the matter was being discussed in Iran, Meshkini had to face men

who avoided looking into her eyes and who preferred to talk gazing at the wall. Her films make you look straight, even if the scene is unpleasant; you cannot turn a blind eye. These films remind us that there are people both in the film and outside of it, and that we should understand their pain and hear their voices.

Another honored guest of the Festival and member of the Jury was British playwright and script-writer, the Oscar-winning Christopher Hampton. Georgian audiences know him from Stephen Frears' Dangerous Liaisons. Hampton presented his film Imagining Argentina starring Antonio Banderas and Emma Thompson. Hampton wrote and directed this political film about the crimes of the Argentinean military regime in the 1970s. Georgian script-writers were delighted to meet Hampton, who explained that free interpretation is the best choice when dealing with script material. Based on his longstanding experience in film and theater, Hampton noted that a script-writer should not be restricted by frames and that freedom of creation does not exclude staying faithful to the original source.

Four films were projected within the Festival section "Actor in Focus" – three by Lina Wertmuller and one by Luchino Visconti. The main parts of all four were performed by Italian film star Giancarlo Giannini. The classical films of the 1970s are distinguished by Giannini's unique charm and the melodic Italian language. Naturally, watching the films that have stood the pressure of time was a delight, which explains the strong attendance for the morning screening of Visconti's The Innocent. This reflected what Istvan Szabo said in his master class: "The audience remembers images and close-ups". Giancarlo Giannini – with his inimitable charm – is unforgettable. This old film

Ulrich Gregor, Giancarlo Giannini, Nika Tavadze, Mohsen Makhmalbaf and Nino Gamrekeli, Still from the Film "Caesar Must Die", Christopher Hampton, Robert Sturua and Istvan Szabo, Still from the Film "love".

Photo: Zinka Barnovi

star still continues to enthuse spectators.

The interest in Georgian films at this year's festival was unusually high. Tickets were sold out several days prior to the projection of Rusudan Chkonia's Keep Smiling. This film has participated with success in international festivals. The audience enjoyed the humorous story of the beauty contest of Georgian mothers. It will be released in March, and hopefully interest will remain high for her first feature film.

Georgian documentary films also sparked the attention of spectators. Participants this year were Tinatin Gurchiani's The Machine Which Makes Everything Disappear, Nino Orjonikidze's and Vano Arsenishvili's English Teacher, Vakhtang Jajanidze's From Monday to Monday and many others. Current Georgian documentary films seemed to follow Mahmalbaf's advice and focus on the problems that only we can share with the world. Certainly, not all the films shared this attitude, but the general tendency was evident. Hopefully, feature films will also follow this trend, indeed noticeable in Rusudan Chkonia's film.

Thus, the 13th International Film Festival in Tbilisi was successful. There were so many outstanding films and meetings that it is impossible to mention every one of them. Discussions about cinema and its unique role in the accelerated rhythm of the modern world were stimulating – the function of cinema to reveal a person, a real person with pain and problems; to speak of intimate human problems within an environment often devoid of humaneness and intimacy. A film should be an exceptional moment of happiness that lasts an hour and a half and enables the spectator to encounter one's self. It does not matter whether this meeting is useful or dangerous. ●

With Love from Georgia

>> Keti Machavariani

In 1960, when the first Georgian-Slovak film, Nikoloz Sanishvili's Interrupted Song, appeared on the screens, Slovakia was part of Socialist Czechoslovakia, and Georgia was part of the huge Soviet empire. The film tells about the love between the Slovak, Misho Zvara, and a Georgian, Eliko Gelovani. The film takes place in Sokhumi and Bratislava in the 1940s. Exactly 17 years later, in 1977, Temur Palavandishvili and Joseph Medved created Racha, My Love, a love story between a Slovak woman, Darina, and a Georgian, called Zaur. The film unites two Rachas – one in Georgia and one in Slovakia.

After a pause of 35 years, Georgian films recently traveled back to Bratislava, and another love story between Slovak cinema-goers and Georgian filmmakers started in the Lumiere Cinema Theater. On November 23, 2012 Racha, My Love opened the Days of Georgian Cinema organized by the Slovak Film Institute and the Georgian National Film Center. The Georgian delegation was represented by GNFC Director Tamar Tatishvili, Deputy Director Salome Sepashvili, film directors Nana Janelidze and Keti Machavariani.

The first film in the official program was Levan Koguashvili's Street Days. The opening and the reception were attended by the Georgian Ambassador in Slovakia Alexandre Nalbandov, employees of the Georgian Embassy and representatives of the diplomatic corps as well as the small Georgian diaspora. The event was organized with support from the Georgian Embassy and the Ministry of Culture of Slovakia.

The program included the following films: Tenghiz Abuladze's and Rezo Chkheidze's Magdana's Lurja (1955), Nana Janelidze's Will There Be a Theater Up There? (2011), Giorgi Ovashvili's The Other Side (2009), Zaza Urushadze's Three Houses (2008) and Otar Iosseliani's Chantrapas. Each projection was followed by a meeting with the audience. Members of the Georgian delegation answered the many questions asked by the Slovak spectators.

The Georgian delegation also visited the Slovak Racha. Hosted by members of the Slovak Film Institute, Alexandra Strelokva and Katarina Tomkova, the guests walked the streets of "Rustaveli" and "Tbilisi" and felt the mood of this European Racha, just like the characters did in Racha, My Love.

In Devin, a suburb of Bratislava where the rivers Moravia and Danube join and form an imaginary border with Austria, there is a heart made of metal wire. Until not long ago, these wires were impassable – dreams of freedom were drowned in the currents of the river. Today this heart symbolizes freedom, unity and the destruction of borders – just as in cinema.

PRODUCTION OUTLOOK

The Camera That Makes Grief Disappear

>> Magda Gogolashvili

It all started like this: In 2011 a casting was announced in Georgia. The participants were young people between 14 and 25 who thought their real stories, aims or dreams were especially interesting and could serve as a basis for a film. Lots of young people were willing to tell their stories to the camera. They became the characters of a documentary film, The Machine Which Makes Everything Disappear. Their interesting, emotional and dramatic stories were told by Tinatin Gurchiani, a Georgian director who recently returned to her native country. The Machine Which Makes Everything Disappear has been created with the support of the Georgian National Film Center, Robert Bosch Stiftung and Goethe Institute. The director of photography is Andreas Bergmann; sound directors are Michal Kraiczok and Marian Mentrup. The German premiere of the film was held during the Leipzig Documentary Film Festival, and the international premiere at the Amsterdam International Festival of Documentary Films IDFA. This is a leading documentary festival, visited by over 120,000 film critics, filmmakers and spectators. The casting was initiated in Tbilisi and the stories of the main characters turned into a documentary film in a month's time. It achieved success in an amazingly short period.

At the IDFA event it was nominated for Best Youth Film (Doc U), Audience Award and First Appearance, and included in the top three films of the festival. The film was nominated in 2012 at the Tbilisi International Film Festival as The Best Georgian Film and won the award. In 2013 The Machine Which Makes Everything Disappear will travel to European and American festivals: Sundance (World Cinema Competition), Helsinki, Goteborg and Trieste... to name a few.

We meet lots of youngsters every day... in the street, in the shops, at work or in places of entertainment. In certain cases, despite our curiosity, they disappear from our life so that we never learn their names, thoughts, problems and joys... The Machine Which Makes Everything Disappear introduces us to young people distinguished from the mass by their opinions, lifestyles and social situations. These are stories of people around us whose lives, situations and ideas had been unknown to us until they were filmed.

Although the characters differ greatly, they jointly draw a picture of contemporary Georgian youth. They are individuals who, at first glance, do not differ from others, but their stories and aspirations

are special, emotional and unique, and this makes them different. They are willing to share their dreams, stories and ideas with the camera. The main reason for their openness is their pain – all of them would like to find a machine that would make their problems disappear...

What are their dreams? Some want to travel to Hollywood; others want to find a job or to join the army. Some want to get married; others want to find their mother.

Why would they request a machine that makes everything disappear? Probably to erase all the unpleasant moments of their life. Although there is no such magic machine, there are objects that can perform similar functions, the camera that soothes their pains. Being frank with the camera, revealing oneself to the camera and to other people – all this is related to hope. The hope that openness and sharing will sooth the pain. For example one of the main characters decides to dare to find her mother, a mother who has abandoned her child and has caused her so much pain, scorn and distress... Having told her story to the camera, the girl decided to take this difficult step and meet her mother. The idea of the film was, on the one hand, to draw a general picture of young people brought up during one of Georgia's difficult periods and, on the other hand, to soothe their pains and comfort them like a magic machine.

One can say without exaggeration that it is an extremely hard task for a director to make the audience hold their breath while watching a 97- minute documentary film, yet here even the static frames seem dynamic and compelling! The characters mostly stand in front of a dilapidated wall to tell their stories, but the stories are alive, dynamic and interesting. There is no single main character in the film. Each of the characters arouses different emotions in the spectator. Cheerful and depressive moods succeed each other. Despite numerous dramatic episodes, the film is full of hope – the lives of all the characters will change for the better.

Although it is "a cold winter" in the film (Irakli Charkviani's song "Winter" is one of the soundtracks), there is hope that spring will come in the lives of the characters. Some of them might travel to Hollywood, others will get married, and still others will find the job of their dreams. All of them are ready to make the first steps to change their lives. Meanwhile, the film is making its first steps to achieve the international success it deserves. ●

The Last Letter

>> Magda Gogolashvili

A new animation film, The Last Letter, was one of the films supported and financed by the Georgian National Film Center in 2011. The film is based on Van Gogh's last letter in which he tells his brother about his emotions and hardships. The film is black and white, based on hand-made animation and computer graphics. The pictures of the great painter are represented in an original way, in an attempt to show the creations of the great master as if seen by Van Gogh himself... Van Gogh's paintings turn into moving emotion... The authors of the films reflect the process of creation of his masterpieces as being slightly impulsive.

In a plain village we meet the main characters of Van Gogh's paintings. They are made live on the background of a singing bird and pleasant music. We view all this through a "subjective camera" and watch in a train window as we see the painter's mixed thoughts, then when the train enters a tunnel we can clearly see the image of the painter. The film ends with the words Vincent wrote to his brother...

Despite the vivid colors in his paintings, Van Gogh was permanently depressed, as his letters show. Perhaps that's why the film is black and white. When the silhouette of the painter is lost again in the sunshine, we remember his words, "I put my heart and soul in my pictures, and meantime I lost myself". The sun is not only a celestial body - it is also a source of life to which man aspires. Van Gogh found this light only in creation. His famous painting "A Chair", dedicated to the emptiness caused by Gauguin's departure, is depicted in the form of Van Gogh's thoughts in the train. The famous "Self-Portrait" is shown as his own reflection in the window.

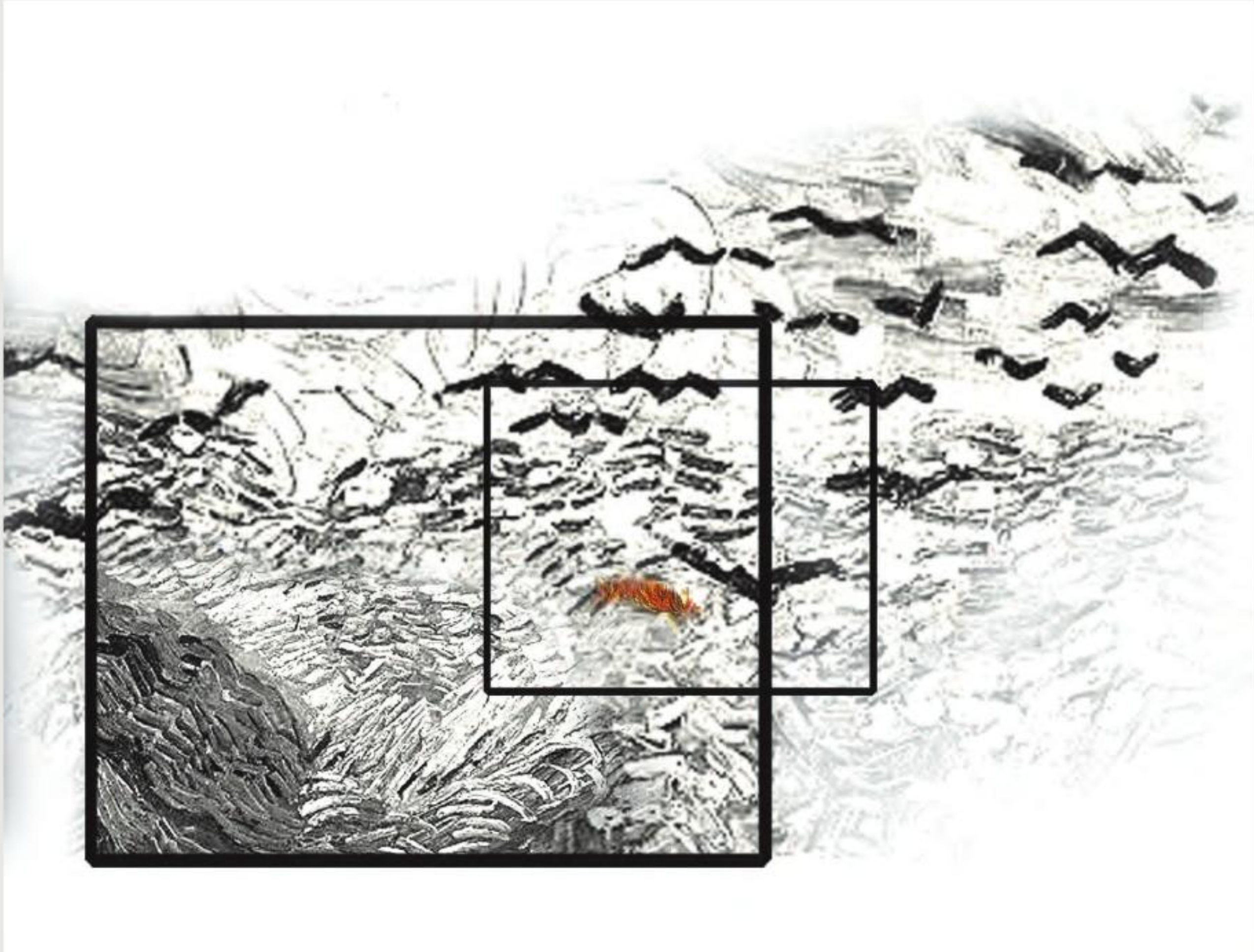
Depression is the underlying current in the film. Black and white animation underlines this and increases the dramatic mood. In search of the painter's inner world, the authors of the film created an open, graphic space, and turned it into a real world. The profound perspective of the graphics of the film is conditioned by a traditional, romantic vision and does not cause any negativism.

Everything has its value, including happiness and talent. To quote Hemingway, "Happiness is rarer among clever people". Being a genius is both a blessing and a curse. Extremely talented people seem to pay a tribute for their "excessive" gift and they are lucky to be able to bring happiness to others, but at the same time they, themselves, are miserable. The greater the aptitudes of their brain, the more unanswered questions appear, accompanied by moral dissatisfaction, loneliness and emptiness.

Whether or not we share this opinion, it is a fact that many geniuses suffered severe depression, including Hemingway, Edgar Alan Poe, Salvador Dali, William Faulkner... and, of course, Van Gogh. His spiritual state is obvious from his letters, in which he explains to his brother how lonely he feels and how he lacks family warmth and love... It is thus paradoxical that Van Gogh suffered permanent melancholy and at the same time gave so much warmth, light and life to the world.

The Last Letter seeks to unite the creation and personality of the great painter. It is difficult to combine the charm of his pictures and his personal features, however. To achieve this, the director avoided standard documentary narration and based his film on allegorical surrealistic animation. This way feelings (as well as facts and chronology) are expressed more vividly. This is an interesting way to see Van Gogh's "Plowed Field", "Sheaves of Wheat in a Field"... and, what's most important, the sun... As the critic Albert Aurier wrote about Van Gogh in the first issue of Mercure de France, "Here objects emit an all-embracing, crazy and blinding light. All of matter is driven to paroxysm; all of nature is twisted wildly, reaching the peaks of sharpness. Here form turns into a nightmare, color into flames, volcanic lava melts into a gemstone, light turns into fire, and life turns into fever..."

The film is colored by the fire of Van Gogh's paintings, which – instead of getting lost in the black and white images-gain new and fascinating tonalities... ●



Film Producer Levan Korinteli Actor Misha Meskhi

>> Natia Meparishvili

The disintegration of the Soviet Union led to the bankruptcy of the post-Soviet states. Economies had to be built from zero; science, culture and art were seriously affected. The film industry entered the most severe crisis since its establishment, and as the period of transition to another type of economy developed, there were little or no financial resources to save the Georgian film industry.

New means of survival had to be found, and Levan Korinteli was a pioneer in this search. In 2005, his first film, A Trip to Karabakh, was created with private investment. This was the beginning of the revival of Georgian cinema, and exemplifies how necessary it is for professionals to get involved in these processes and create something viable – in the film industry as in other fields.

A Trip to Karabakh is based on Aka Morchiladze's book, and I was highly interested in attending the shootings. As a fourth-year student in the Department of Film Direction of the University of Theater and Cinema, I dreamed of watching professionals at work on the set. The director of the film was Levan Tutberidze and Director of photography was Goran Pacievic. The crew consisted of famous and talented professionals. I was especially amazed at Levan Korinteli's energy – he was everywhere, with the director, cameraman, sound director, actors. As leader of the crew it was all very natural and no one was irritated. Now I understand why. He was simply in love with the work process; he loved the action and words of each character. It was obvious that Levan had discovered himself.

Levan Korinteli's films include A Trip to Karabakh, 2005;Russian Triangle, – 2007; Three Houses, 2008;Conflict Zone, 2009;Rene Goes to Hollywood, 2010; and Street Days, 2010.

Did A Trip to Karabakh meet your expectations?
LK: I had no doubts about the success of the film. The project was interesting and the theme was topical and painful. I have cooperated with pleasure with nearly all leading Georgian directors...

Tell us about the success of your films...
LK: They were shown successfully at various festivals, and for example A Trip to Karabakh was at the Moscow International Film Festival.

In March a new film will appear on Georgian screens. Its working title is Karabakh 3. Is this film the third in the trilogy?
LK: This is a working title, although the final title is already thought of... (he laughs). The final part of the trilogy is a logical continuation of A Trip to Karabakh and Conflict Zone the previous films, although it is an independent film too. Karabakh 3 will likely be called Guardian, and is jointly produced by Millimeter Films, Independent Film Project and Sanguko. I can say confidently that these three films will remain a trilogy.

Karabakh 2 is famous for its music. Who wrote the soundtrack of the third film?
LK: The author is again Niaz Diasamidze. The director of Karabakh 3 is Zaza Urushadze and the director of photography is Mindia Esadze. As a producer, I am very satisfied with our cooperation. Unlike the first film of the trilogy, this one was not financed by the Georgian National Film Center. Although the financing is not large, it's enough to create a film for the Georgian market.

What do you think of the Georgian film market?
LK: I have never made a film solely for the Georgian market. Our market is too small for a film to cover all its costs. When I worked on my first film, I knew the Georgian market would be too small for it, and A Trip to Karabakh was released in Russia and many post-Soviet countries as well as in Europe.

You have produced numerous films in recent years, and all of them are high quality. What is the way out of the current crisis?
LK: New multiplex movie-theaters should be opened. Today people go to the cinema only for entertainment type films, which hampers the development of author's films and the art of film production.

Producers are well aware of the current problems in the film industry. In what field is the lack of professionals most obvious?
LK: There is a lack of professional graphic artists who are experienced in films. Besides, there is no photography school in Georgia. In general, there is a lack of professional film staff here.

What are your plans after the trilogy?
LK: I'll tell you that after Karabakh 3 has made its theatrical debut...(he laughs)

I was going to say good-bye to Levan Korinteli, when the door opened and "Gogliko" entered. "Gogliko", who is the main

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

character in all three films of the trilogy, is performed by Misha Meskhi. So I took advantage of this chance and asked a few questions to the popular actor.

Please tell us about your film career.
MM: A Trip to Karabakh was my successful debut. People frequently ask me which of the films of the trilogy I like most, but all are dear to me, so I can't choose any one of them. These films allowed me to develop as an actor... (he laughs). I have changed completely and have become more professional. Frankly speaking, I was lucky from the very beginning as I was Rezo Chkheidze's student at the University of Theater and Cinema. Soon I got a role in these wonderful films, and most importantly it was the main role. Three excellent directors worked on these films, and my character "Gogliko" was the leading role in all of them, so it was invaluable for me.

Is there any similarity between you, Misha Meskhi, and "Gogliko"?
MM: Yes, there is obvious similarity, but for me the most interesting are the scenes in which I am more like "Gogliko" and not so much Misha...

Currently the most popular visual art according to critics is film production. Many here consider cinema as a means of entertainment above all, and to make a profit. Levan Korinteli thinks otherwise. He thinks that only "popcorn" cinema is not enough, and he is optimistic about the future of the Georgian film industry. ●

The Last Trip >> Magda Gogolashvili

Zaza Urushadze's film, The Last Trip, is the final part of the famous trilogy A Trip to Karabakh, based on Aka Morchiladze's literary masterpiece. The film is the director's independent improvisation with different dramaturgy and a subject line which is interesting for the audience, whether or not they have seen the first two films of the trilogy. The Last Trip is the tragedy of a lost generation. The complicated process of replacing an epoch of destruction with a new reality is shown from a different angle, although its tragic essence has remained unchanged....

In general, a high degree of improvisation is characteristic of Zaza Urushadze, an artist and director who thinks outside the box dramaturgically speaking.

The main character Gogliko (performed by Misha Meskhi) leaves prison after 15 years of detention. He finds himself in his native, but now alien, city where everything – lifestyle, environment, society and reality – is strangely different. Gogliko finds it difficult to adjust to new values. Although his familiar reality was never distinguished by generosity or kindness, here everything is alien... This could be a metaphor created by the director to express the phenomenon of loneliness of the generation described in the film.

Many of Gogliko's generation were "bad guys" and drug addicts. In his post-imprisonment life he observes a new reality based on totally different goals and ideas. In the previous two films the subject line concentrated on the adventures of several characters. In The Last Trip, however, Gogliko is the main focus of the movie and the entire film develops around him. Episodically, old characters appear, there is a love story and, unexpectedly, an old conflict with a friend's murderer comes to an end.

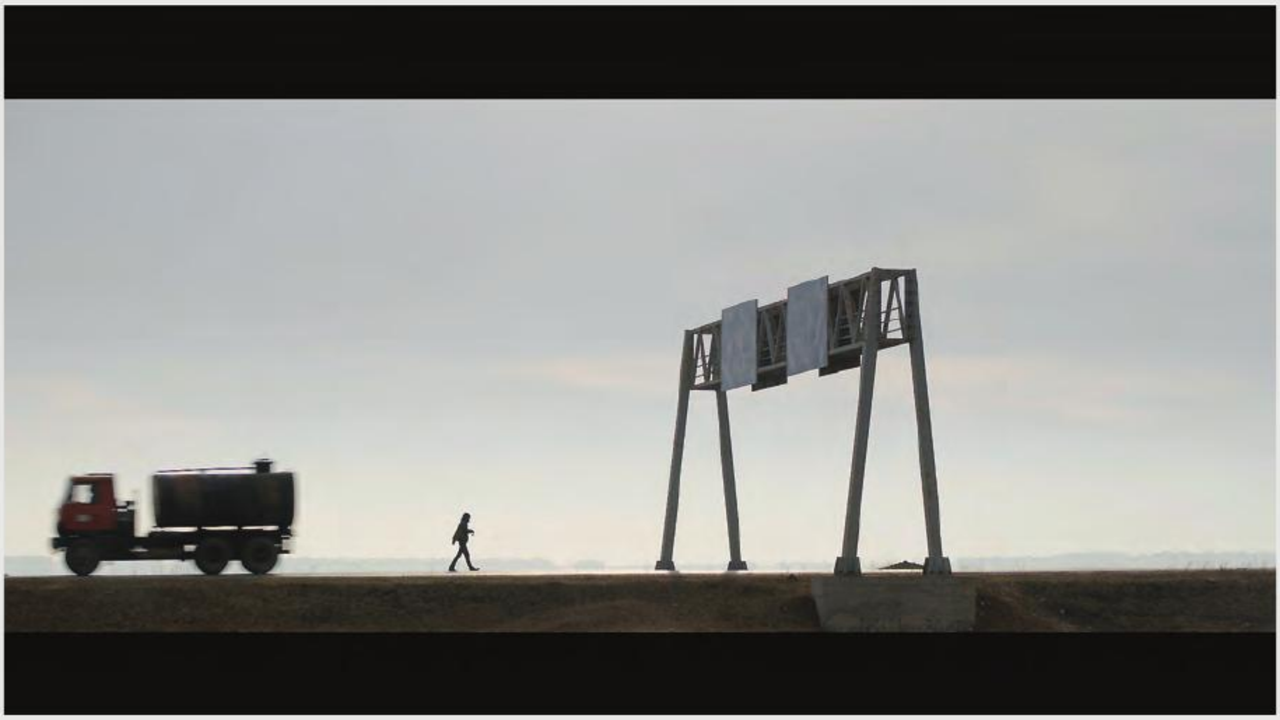
Gogliko is a special character, the audience's favourite from the very first film of the trilogy. In The Last Trip his personality unfolds in a different way – not because he is a complicated character but because Gogliko symbolizes the tragedy of a certain category of people. Gogliko is loved by the audience for his sincerity. Nobody is waiting for him outside the prison: his mother and close friends are no longer there for him. However, despite the drama of his life, Gogliko retains his open-heartedness and self-irony which conceals and masks his pain. In its dynamics, the subject line resembles Gogliko: in certain episodes it is funny and follows a cheerful rhythm even though the story is serious: the graves of friends, a father who has become insane due to his son's death and an orphan child show the film's mood. However, for the audience to bear these harder realities the director has made Gogliko a "light" character. In certain cases he expresses his comic nature in the way he faces this new reality. This is a particularity of the film, making it interesting not only in content but also in form. Georgian films created during the crises of the 1990s did not focus on the issue of the relationship between the main character and his reality. Thus, it has been necessary to develop this form in current Georgian film dramaturgy.

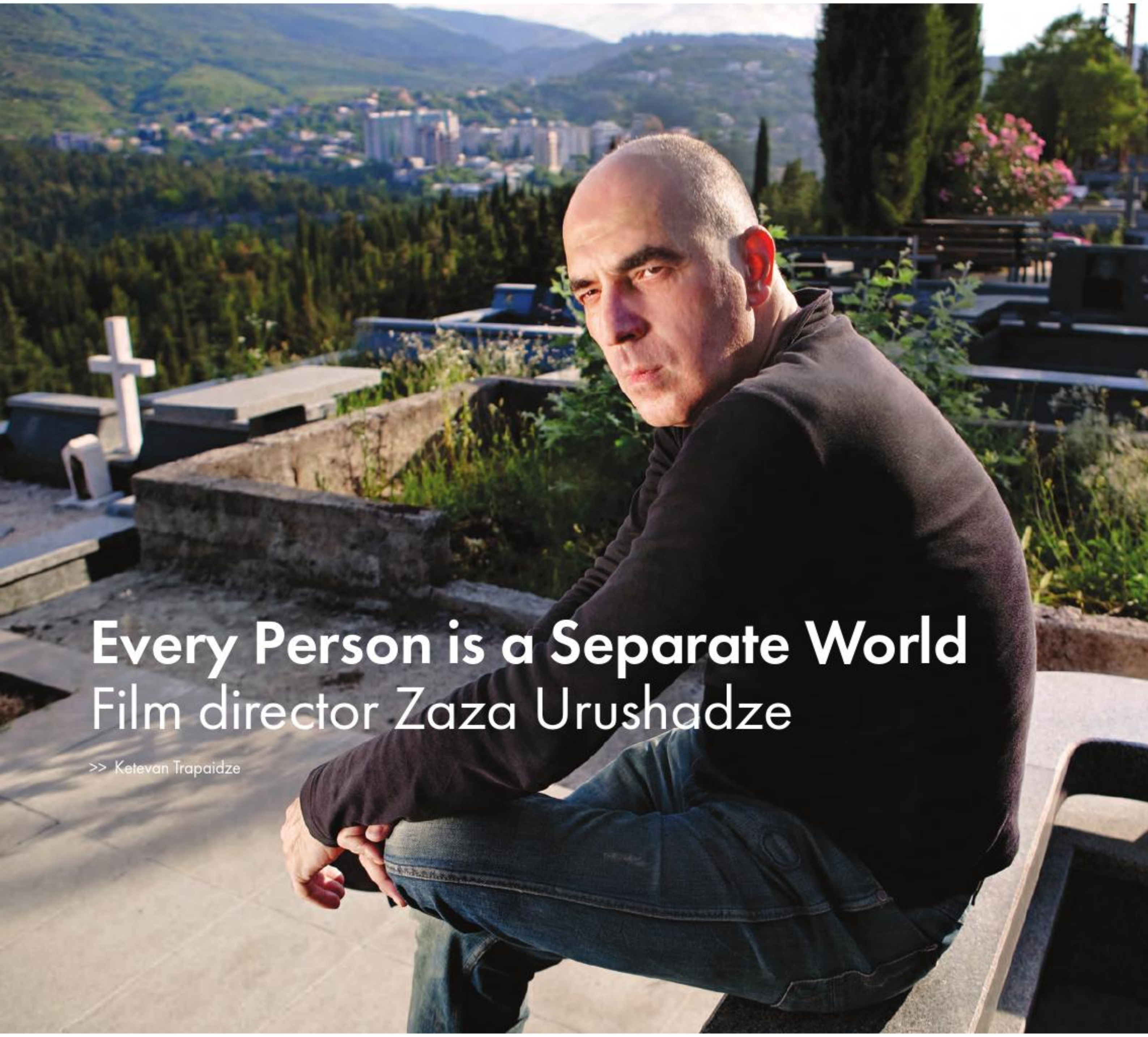
The Last Trip has retained the integrity of content and form, whereas the dramatic subject line has acquired a different form distinguished by healthy negation – the audience can freely accept the reality offered to them by negating the past. The Last Trip is a drama about replacing the reality of the recent past by a new one, an episode showing the tragedy of one generation and its difficulties in adjusting to the present. The film seems in some ways to have nothing in common with the previous ones, apart from the identity of some characters.

Gogliko commits suicide, and another dies with him, thus those who do not deserve to go on living disappear. People whose lives have led to numerous tragedies vanish in the same way as they appeared – dramatically, upon a sudden decision and impulse, without any prospect of continuing complicated relationships. It seems that only the death of these characters was of some use to those around them. This is how they differ from other characters in contemporary films.

How can a film be commercially successful if it is not based on the evaluation of eternal truths which are so important for the audience? It appears that Zaza Urushadze's creative potential is unique in its diversity. He manages to focus on varied mental details and motives while depicting what seem at first sight ordinary and familiar characters. This is supported by the director's precise knowledge of figurative categories and functions: his main focus is the particular perceptions of the main character. The function of the character Gogliko and his environment lead to a feeling of reality. Expectation and tension increase permanently during the film.

Whether or not one should focus on separate features of various genres and styles with regard to a given film, one thing is obvious—this type of narrative is new and useful for today's Georgian cinema. ●





Every Person is a Separate World
Film director Zaza Urushadze

>> Ketevan Trapaidze

Let's talk about what is most important in your creative work. Apart from the plasticity which is so characteristic of your films, there are certain peculiarities about your attitude towards actors. Which film would you mention in this connection?

Z.U.: I would mention Three Houses and The Last Trip. The first embraces three centuries, three shooting methods and three different aesthetics. It is based on a romantic vision – the audience may not feel it, but every frame is created around movement. The second film is black and white, because I view the given period as such. The third story is shot with a hand camera. In the first story, the acting is a bit pretentious, that is my vision of the 19th century and its characteristic behavior. That's why we used a slightly pretentious way of acting.

This pretentiousness is achieved on purpose, and the aim is to create the spirit of the period, right?

Z.U.: Yes, this is done on purpose and it's natural. For example, Zura Kipshidze's character. He's very interesting in the first part, because his slightly pretentious behavior creates the spirit of the time. Overall it was interesting to work on Three Houses. Actors often say they are comfortable working with me and I like this, though I don't use any special method working with them. Of course, I have studied film direction, but I don't work based on any methodology. I follow the process intuitively.... To give a rough example, there is a category of actors who perform better if we approach them critically. Other actors have complexes when they're criticized. I feel it. I try to allow actors to reveal the highest level of their abilities.

In this sense Three Houses is special to me. I have worked with the actor Janri Lolashvili for a long time, first on Hot Dog , for five years. We became close. With Zura Kipshidze and Murman Jinoria it was the first time we cooperated and it was very interesting. Murman has a unique way of acting. There were also Nineli Chankvetadze and Nino Burduli, who had minor roles but they added charm to the film. I am also grateful to Eka Andronikashvili, Dato Iashvli and, in fact, all the actors. Yet, I think the pillar of the film is Nato Murvanidze who plays a character who is struggling and forgiving at the same time. Sometimes she feels disgust and sometimes sympathy. She wants to punish her husband's mistress, but later forgives her. I think Nato performed her role brilliantly.

Nato Murvanidze plays with an amazing sense of moderation. She's neither overemotional nor over-modest. Such moderation is rare in contemporary Georgian films, and you probably played an important role in achieving it.

Z.U.: Certainly much depends on the director, however actors have different limits. For Nato Murvanidze, the upper limit of her abilities is very high indeed. Yet only the director has a vision of the film in its integral form. Episodes are created separately, and the director is responsible for integrating them.

When I watched The Last Trip I noticed a new intonation in Misha Meskhi's acting. The film revealed his talent in a different way.

Z.U.: Yes, Misha Meskhi is a talented person. Currently I am cooperating with him on my new film, and it is interesting to observe how he has changed from " Ghogliko" to a totally different character.

The new film is based on your own script. In all of your films the main theme is the relationship between a

I don't make any plans beforehand. Everything is born based on emotion

person and his social environment. You always manage to maintain the integral artistic thread of the film. In the past decade weak dramaturgy has been an issue here, so it is pleasing to see that artistically perfect dramaturgy is a key component of your films. What is your main focus? Is it a character, the type of relationship between an individual and society, or something else?

Z.U.: Emotion gives birth to everything. With my project Three Houses I participated in the GNFC competition. Unfortunately, I won the competition not only as a director but also as a producer. I say "unfortunately" because I hate being the producer of my films, as I have to think about too many things. Currently I have a very good producer. In the case of The Last Trip, it was an order. The script wasn't ready, yet everything was done for the preparatory stage. Levan Korinteli offered to shoot the film and I agreed. With Three Houses I was director, scriptwriter and producer. Frankly speaking, the second part of the film was initially a totally different story. I made the first story and then the third one, and left the second one for later. The time came to finance the second story, but I didn't like it.

Then I remembered once my mother told me about my grandfather's friend who died exactly as it shows in the film... His mistress did not know what to do and called his wife. The story takes place on the background of World War II, which adds tension. I wrote the second story in about ten days and we started shooting immediately.

With regard to author's films I don't make any plans beforehand. Everything is born based on emotion. An Estonian producer told me he liked Three Houses and invited me to shoot another film, so the theme of my current film is this: There was a village in Abkhazia inhabited by Estonians. During the war they were exiled to their motherland. They asked me to develop the plot as follows: several Estonians remain in Abkhazia. One of them cultivates tangerines, another makes wooden crates. Suddenly the subject line developed in a different way, and in two weeks the script was finished. I won a project competition in San Francisco. Out of 1000 projects only five were selected and mine was among them. It seems I make good scripts for my films. By the way, I cooperated with Uta Beria on The Last Trip. He was the chief scriptwriter and I was very satisfied with the result, so it is not my aim to write scripts for all of my films. That usually happens by itself.

Have you ever thought of making documentaries?

Z.U: I like documentary cinema. Once Nugzar Shataidze and I worked on a documentary film he had written about bread; he played in the film too. Everything was interesting and it started perfectly well, then unfortunately, the project was suspended. We only shot for one day! For me it is vital to be involved in the filming process. I was appointed Director of the Georgian National Film Center in 2002, so then how could I finance my own films?! So I financed others. During this time I was invited to work on Hot Dog. I worked on this while I was carrying out my responsibilities for GNFC. Being on the set brought me satisfaction, and the fact that Nugzar Shataidze and Kote Jandieri were the scriptwriters for the film helped a great deal.

Do you find that the activities of the film center are successful?

Z.U.: Very successful indeed. I may be subjective, because I, too, have contributed to the activities of the film center. We worked in difficult times. Nobody understood what the Institute was. We even managed to finish films that had been suspended for 10-11 years! Some people had said those films were not worth finishing, but we fulfilled our obligations and moved on to new activities. The establishment of GNFC was the most significant step in today's Georgian film industry.

Eldar Shengelaya played a major role in establishing GNFC, and despite many challenges the national film center started functioning. A director loses his freedom when he is appointed to an administrative position. At that time the Union of Filmmakers was asked to present their candidate. They selected me, and I supported the idea of establishing the national film center. Now the results of its activities can be seen. Georgia is a member of Eurimages. I had always wished to do this and was supported by Otar Iosseliani, but at that time it was impossible to accomplish. I think maximum results have been achieved in certain fields, not just because my projects have won GNFC competitions. I would say the same even if my projects had not succeeded.

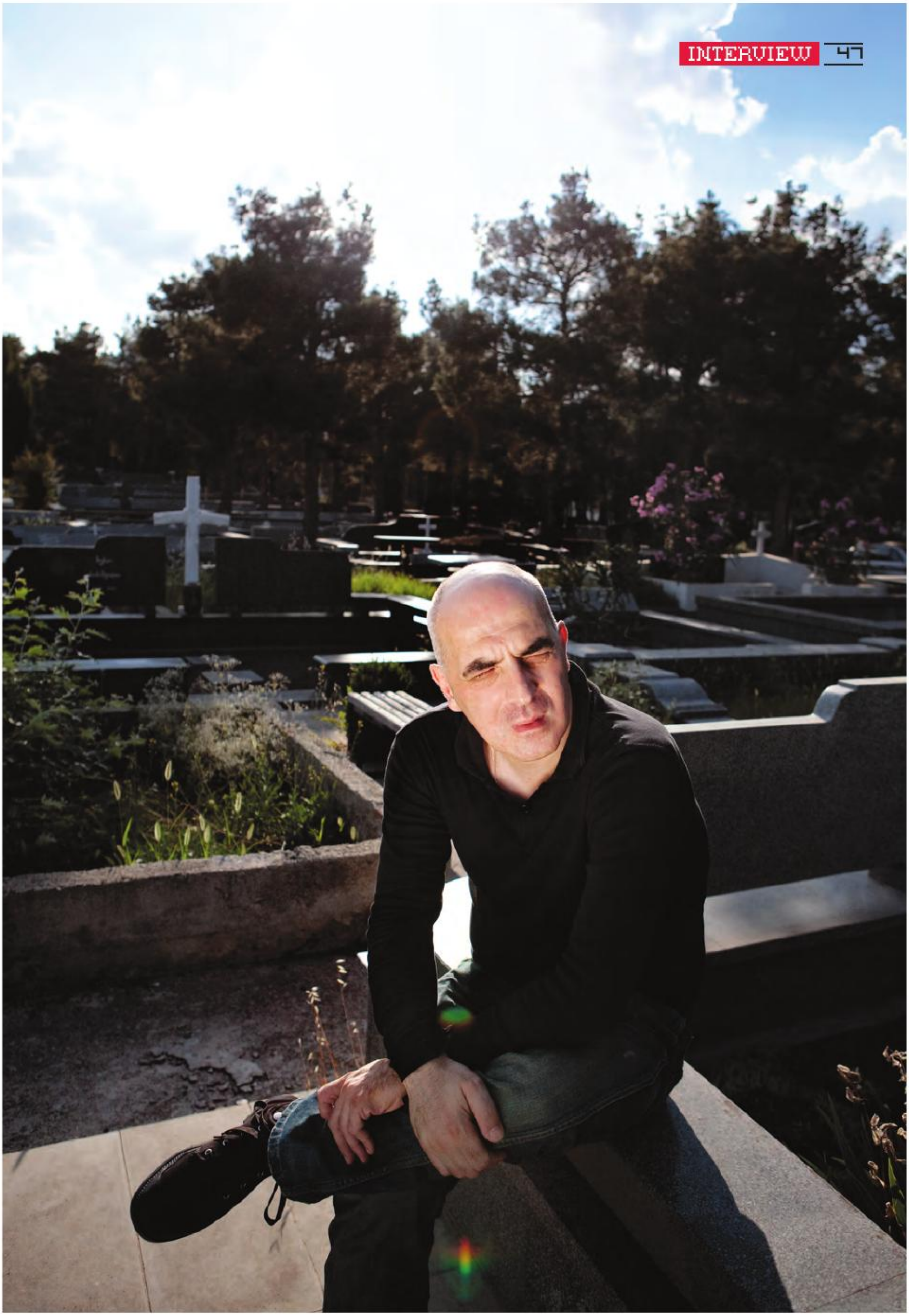


Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Personality means a lot. Every person is a separate world. That's why we are interested in certain persons

In general, I think your cinematographic interests are related to your main characters' personal traits and their active protests. Georgian films made in the 1980s-1990s had mainly passive characters, but I remember your student films and your search for a different kind of character. Is that related to your personality?
Z.U.: I can't conform to certain things and want to stay faithful to my principles. We should be devoted to our major values, and probably in this way I resemble my characters.

All of them have very individual traits. I think this is very important.
Z.U.: Yes, personality means a lot. Every person is a separate world. That's why we are interested in certain persons. One cannot make a better film than 8 1/2 or create better music than Beethoven. We are interested in individualism, personal vision, dreams... It depends how a director manages to express all that. We are attracted by the inner worlds of others and expect something special. That's why we are interested in new films. Maybe they are not better than classic films, but they may be good and appealing in their own way, and show us a new world. Thus, the inner world of every person is intriguing, because it includes many facets.

What films and which directors have influenced you? I mean both Georgian and foreign films and directors.
Z.U.: Among Georgian films my favorite is Great Green Valley because it creates a cinematographic mood.... I also like old black and white films. I am not an amateur of neorealism, although great films were created in that period. I also like Krzysztof Kieslowski. Although I make totally different kinds of films, his work has motivated me.

Do your impressions and attitudes to films change over time?
Z.U.: If I like a film a lot, this attraction remains unchanged all my life. Certainly, every person develops with time and his interests and moods change. But whatever is firmly in one's spirit remains, and feeds him. It does not necessarily have to be films. Many people have retained emotions related to their village or childhood reminiscences.

Would you agree to write a script for somebody else?
Z.U.: I have not thought about it. Initially Three Houses was planned as a Georgian-American coproduction. Then they said it was hard to obtain US financing and asked me to sell them the script. Thank God I refused! I write scripts when I have to submit a project. However, I would gladly have offered my script to Kieslowski who was a very talented director.

At the beginning of The Last Trip I couldn't guess where the narrative would lead. Is there any connection between Aka Morchiladze's works and this film, or is it a totally different story?
Z.U.: This film is not based on any literary source. It is simply a logical continuation of the fate of the characters of previous films. For commercial reasons it was to become Karabakh 3, the last part of a trilogy. Those who have seen the first two parts will notice nothing illogical, yet it doesn't matter whether one has seen the first two parts. Since each film is an independent story. They have been commercially successful, and even though I hadn't done any market research to define the audiences, all ages have liked it. Despite the low budget, we managed to appeal to all audiences.

Although I like author's films, I am also interested in making films on order. Hot Dog was an order, and it was interesting. I initially refused to work on Stay with Me because of its primitive dramaturgy then I agreed, as I felt we shouldn't have complexes. It is important that the source of my income is my profession, and I create about two full length films each year. This is a significant amount for a director in Georgia.

I don't think I will make a melodrama again, but I would be willing to make a comedy if there is an order for it. Even though Some Like it Hot is a comedy, it is a fascinating film. Stay With Me was a remake of an Iranian film, and the producer was constantly criticized for plagiarizing. People often confuse "remake" with "plagiarism", however.

When a film is ordered you have to follow all the rules – e.g. when the main characters kiss, you have to emphasize this episode with music. I avoided such effects in Three Houses as I find them primitive. I knew I had to follow the rules of the genre, but at the same time I tried to make a film in good taste. In this regard, it was interesting to work on Stay With Me, but in general I don't like such films.

You mentioned Janri Lolashvili. You have tried to use his acting resources to the utmost, correct?

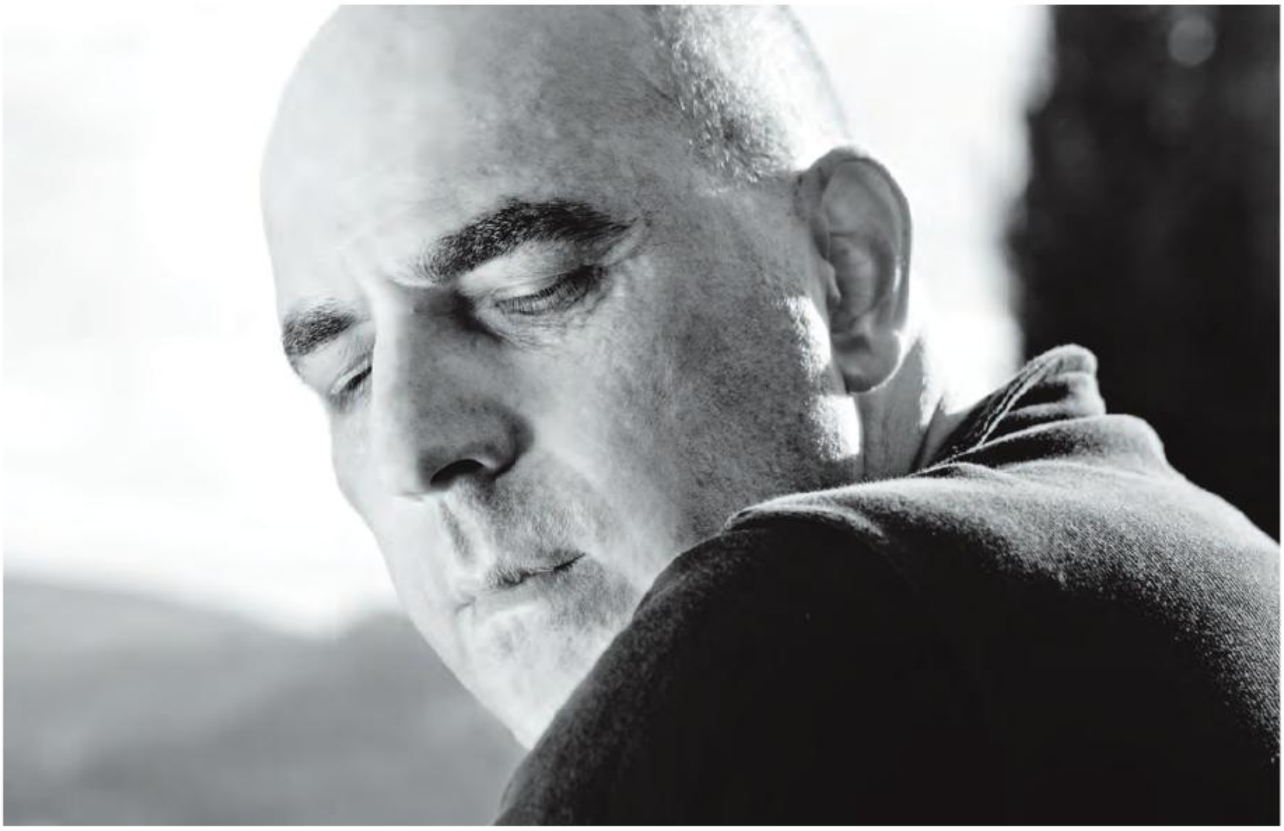


Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Z.U.: Yes, he is an actor of a different type. He doesn't resemble anyone. He's an intellectual and we feel it in his acting. An actor with intelligence always knows what you want from him. This kind of actor is not empty, which is the problem with many actors. Unfortunately, there is no school for film actors in Georgia – they aren't even taught what to avoid while playing in a film.

This is not due to a lack of practice, but we need a system to educate film actors.
Z.U.: There were many characters in Hot Dog, for example and probably all were Georgian. They are talented actors, but most of them don't know what to do. It is very sad, and complicates the work of a director. Many Georgian actors are too theatrical for films. For example, Al Pacino is natural and if they tell him he is "theatrical", he won't understand that being "theatrical" means being artificial. I frequently waste a lot of time, and the entire crew gets irritated, because an actor cannot glance naturally, the way I show him.

What is your opinion about current Georgian cinema? Maybe you have some concrete wishes.
Z.U.: I know one thing for sure – there are talented people, but it is very important for directors and actors to master their profession. Talent is a separate thing. It would be a pity if a talented actor or director is lost due to a lack of professionalism. On the other hand, I think great talent will always find its way!

Still, it is a sin to deprive a person the opportunity to develop professional skills, so our Universities have to try hard to educate talented young people. Personally I would be offended if anyone complimented me by saying, "You have done it professionally". Of course I have – everything should be done professionally and this is not a compliment! It should be an ordinary thing for a director to shoot films well and for an actor to speak and act in a natural way! There are many talented people, and they will always exist – Georgians have cinematographic talent. Despite all the hardships and problems, we continue to make films. This means the ice has melted and things have started moving forward. ●

The Cradle of Wine – The Beginning of Kindness

>> Ketevan Basilashvili

Merab Kokochashvili, who began filmmaking in the 1960s, is a Georgian producer distinguished for his attention to national and social values. These attitudes are obvious in his earlier films as well as recent ones. He adheres to a realistic Georgian cinema style, is an energetic filmmaker and deep thinker.

Kokochashvili's interest in national values is linked to his credo, ideas and principles. He has always been a realist, although the themes of his films are diverse. He gives special significance to the relationship between the individual, nature and society, the search for one's inner self, disappointment and inner conflict.

Viticulture and the production of wine have always been a matter of life for Georgians. Great thinkers in generations past, too, have adored wine, and considered it part of Georgian culture and philosophy. Speaking about wine and viticulture is like discussing the Georgian spirit and genes. Most historical sources and scientific discoveries have shown that Georgia is "The Cradle of Wine".

In 2011 Kokochashvili made a documentary film called "The Cradle of Wine", and though it is a documentary, there are staged elements that illustrate the author's improvised and free narrative style and his change of field. The theme itself is very important: the history of newly-discovered wine, pre-Christian rituals related to wine, and the influence of the culture of wine making on the national consciousness. The author underlines the idea that in the Georgian mind, all sacred and ritual objects are related to wine, including religion, culture, customs and moral norms. Kokochashvili refused to follow any pre-determined script, and his narration is based on the diverse travels of famous Georgian actors and musicians – Kakhi Kavsadze, Givi Berikashvili, Jemal Baghashvili and others.

This travel through time, history and eternal dimensions is both realistic and tangible. The actors joke, think, touch antique objects and tell real or invented stories. At the same time, they stick to the theme of the archaeological discovery that led to many other discoveries.

The film is both academic and joyful. The characters travel to different parts of Georgia, listen to traditional and ritual songs, and meet people who adore wine and follow the traditions of the Georgian table. They talk to archaeologists who discovered ancient objects related to wine. The entire film focuses on the theme of wine – its history, its importance for Georgia and Georgians, how it has passed down through centuries, its way into Western Europe and the function of wine in the West. These details show the world that Georgia is, indeed, the cradle of wine. The archaeological discovery of ancient grape-seeds answered numerous questions and deepened our knowledge about the culture of wine. The cheerfulness of the main characters is contagious. Georgians can discuss the theme of wine endlessly, and this shows in the film, which uses diverse stylistic devices to prove how easy it is to retain love and kindness while there is good will, as carried through wine.

The colors and other visuals are full of warmth, and the attention of the audience is drawn smoothly from one interior to another, from a wine-cellar to a valley where a unique discovery was made. There is an fascinating scene that takes place in a traditional sulphur bath, with a cheerful quartet wrapped in "toga" sheets performing a piece of music with deep inspiration.

"The materials and research related to wine production in Georgia are endless. Since their origin, Georgians have been making wine. They have developed the culture of wine and thus developed themselves," says one. But despite this lofty quotation, the character of the film is neither pretentious nor arrogant. Without any exaggeration or superfluous emotion, we simply follow the characters of the film in their travels.

Human nature has always created barriers to retaining moral values. Many times ultimate kindness was rejected, however age and wisdom overcame cruelty. It is the same now – having suffered wars and calamities, humankind returns to its beginnings and tries to find eternal motifs. The story of the grapevine and wine culture bring us back to these eternal values. ●

Laguna Vere or an Unbelievable Story

>> Vona Brodsky

Laguna Vere is hard to describe. For a long time nothing much happens in the film, and then when things do start to happen no one understands what's going on. For the first 20 minutes the spectators lose their sense of time and are engrossed in the obscure, detailed activities in an office in Tbilisi. The characters are the usual kind of people—one playing poker online and borrowing money all the time, the other through the internet at swimming pools (Laguna Vere is also a well-known swimming pool in Tblisi—is this the basis for the title?). All the characters have the same iPhones with the same ring tone and they all want to go home to celebrate New Year. The "documentary" style made with a hand camera, the "natural" mises-en-scene, and – rare for Georgian films – actors who are not acting, all give a sense of strangeness.

There's a casting scene with tall slim girls being selected for shooting who are asked if their religious faith allows them to walk about naked. The scene becomes so ridiculous that the audience forgets they are totally unaware of what is going on. It is like watching a modern version of The Blue Mountains—in fact half of the audience admitted after the premiere that they made this association. Suddenly, there is a Hitchcock-like feeling of suspense: "My God, What's going on?" can be heard in the dark movie hall. Nobody understands what is happening, neither at the beginning nor at the end of the film; but this doesn't matter—the viewers' emotional state has become agitated.

The main character runs away somewhere, because others run away too. Every character of the film is so scared that the audience expects a kind of Godzilla to appear. They expect to find out any minute what's going on, but in the end, the main character saunters into a cigarette store and then goes home.

The director has irritated the nervous system of the audience, and the spectators have to follow his rules of the game. Viewers are so impressed by the director's humor and his strange, manipulative attitude that they leave the hall both confused and charmed. The next day they all worry about one thing – what if somebody asks them why the film is called Laguna Vere! ●

Imago Mundi >> Vona Brodsky

Gio Mgeladze's Imago Mundi is an erotic drama. Its style is close to Noir, with elements of a thriller. It is hard to characterize this short film as a particular genre, and I will also abstain from telling the subject line.

The most interesting peculiarity of the film is that the script cannot be heard. The actors do speak, but the sound is switched off. Nothing can be heard except the breathing of the actors and the overwhelming noise of the environment that sounds at first like some technical problem. However, after a few minutes the viewer gets used to the sounds and lack of voices and tries to catch some words by reading lips. Finally viewers tend to give up and follow the environment created by the director. This environment resembles a theatre decor. (In fact Gio Mgeladze was the director of a theatrical play with the same title, although the story was different.) Everything looks like stage props, including the park where the action takes place, the yellow autumn leaves, the lights and the invented world in which a man and a woman meet late at night.

One of them...But we are not telling their story. This environment was created on purpose, as everything is acceptable here and one believes in everything. As for the actors' silence – the director explained that the original script evoked the affair between Vladimir Mayakovsky and Lilya Brik, but in the editing process he decided to switch off the voices and free the film from them. This added drama and tension to the film, allowing complete freedom of interpretation. It was not a conceptual decision, but rather a spontaneous and intuitive step. The director, who also plays in the film, is characterized for his artistic spontaneity and says he chose the title because he liked the sound of it. Later he found the phrase just to appease the interest of those who analyzed the film or came to interview him.

An artist should have the gift of persuasion. There was no film budget whatsoever, but the main actress, Tati Baramia, was so charmed by the script that she flew from New York at her own expense to take part in the film for free. This was true of the entire crew.

I will abstain from saying such trivial things as "I like it" or "I don't like it". I will simply say it's a real author's film, through which Gio Mgeladze created his personal Imago Mundi – his own picture of the universe. ●

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Watermelon >> Vona Brodsky

Watermelon is a rather sad comedy about two fat men who try to sell watermelons in a nearly deserted place in summer. One of them succeeds, while the other fails. However, finally solidarity and friendship take over, and the comic competition ends in an enthusiastic Kakhetian song.

It was a surprise to see such a typical Georgian film created by a graduate of the Lodz film school. Watermelon is the first contemporary film that carries on a longstanding tradition of Georgian comic short films, such as Wine Pot and numerous other comedies. Watermelon also has some European features and Europeans have liked the film; it has received awards at numerous festivals.

The film is the first for Tato Kotetishvili to direct. He studies at the Department of Direction of Photography yet he's already a talented film director. He took the risk of inviting only non-professional actors to participate in the film. The two main characters are genuine Kakhetians both in appearance and behavior – the spectator feels they would behave the same way in real life.

Watermelon is a kind, sad and warm film, full of humor and slight irony. This is scarce in recent Georgian films. The light style of the film may be due to the fact that the director lives in Poland and far from the current severe reality of Georgia, however he has retained a love for the Georgian character and has managed brilliantly to portray the specific Kakhetian temperament. ●

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Chaika or the desire for freedom >> Irine Zhordania

Cinetech is one of the first independent production studios in Georgia. Since its establishment, the company has created many interesting projects. This year Cinetech offered another Georgian-European production, which is a full-length feature film entitled Chaika, first screened at the San-Sebastian Festival in Spain. Its Tbilisi premiere will be held at the Tbilisi International Festival in December 2012. Film Print discussed Chaika and the Georgian film industry with Cinetech's Director, Zurab Maghalashvili.

The title of the film takes us back to Chekhov...

ZM: Certainly, the title reminds us of Chekhov, although there is no Treplev or Arkadin in the film.

Does the main character resemble Zarechnaya?

ZM: There is a certain resemblance to Zarechnaya. The film tells about a girl who was born and grew up in the steppes of Kazakhstan, near the Baikonur space launch site. All her childhood she watched spaceships shooting into the sky. Valentina Tereshkova, the first female astronaut, was nicknamed Chaika, which means seagull in Russian. The girl's dream was to be like Chaika and fly into space; this was a symbol of freedom to her. Her life was hard, then she escaped from home and found herself on a ship – and gave birth to a child, not knowing who the father was. When she became happy, her child was grown up and she found true love again – she ran away on the eve of the wedding.

Does she hope to find true freedom?

ZM: Yes, it constantly eludes us; at least this is so in this film. One can give up the most valuable things to have freedom. I see it that way, and for me the main theme of the film is freedom, although the film Director portrays this more materialistically.

Chaika's crew has implemented several projects with your studio

ZM: This is our third project carried out with the Spanish studio Kinoskopik,, and we have a great collaboration, yet our relations started unexpectedly. They came to Georgia after the war in August 2008 to make a TV program when I met them, and offered to make a joint film.

Our first project was a film called ORI, consisting of two independent stories

taking place, one in a town and one in the country. It was a film about post-traumatic stress syndrome, and was a success. The Spanish partners took most of the risks—they borrowed funds and invested about 45,000 Euros in the film.. Later the film sold for 280 000 Euros! This project was followed by a short film called Goo. It's a story against violence, that later became part of our part of the project "Farewell to Arms". These projects were the reason we received financing for Chaika from the Spanish Ministry of Culture. The competition is very fierce and it's extremely hard to obtain State financing in Spain now.

What kind of film is Chaika?
ZM: In comparison to ORI, which was a typical writer's film based on mood and discoveries, a person's inner world with little cinematographic interpretation, Chaika is more dynamic. However, it also gives glimpses into the main character's inner world.

How many countries participated in this production?
ZM: Four. We started the project with Spain, then later France and Russia joined in. The Russians are represented by Rustam Ibragimbekov who is the producer script-writer and director. In summer we will start shooting in Georgia. Part of the creative group and the entire technical crew will be Georgian.

What is the film about?
ZM: To put it briefly, it's about humanism. The author criticizes the widespread custom in Armenia and Azerbaijan where people are evaluated based on their ethnic identity and their family name. The position of the author is quite bold, and he has had problems in Azerbaijan. However, in general, so far we have been successful with our coproduction.

Another major production we are working on is called The Titan, about the life of a boxer. Co-producers are from Spain, Bulgaria and Georgia.

What is the greatest problem in Georgian filmmaking?
ZM: It is very important to reach a stage where State financing is not essential. Small independent studios should be able to produce independent projects. Certainly, major projects should be supported by the State, but smaller projects should be able to survive independently without State subsidies. The main problem in Georgia is that the film industry is not integrated with business. There were attempts in this direction in the 90s, but they failed. There were plans to carry out several significant projects like Merab Svirava's first feature film, Duru. This was a commercial project and it was hoped that revenues from this film would finance another one, A Man Walked Along the Road, a story based on Otar Chiladze's novel. For three months cinema theaters were packed, but the authors were cheated by their "partners", and the Director had to leave Georgia to cover his debts. It was a terrible example of broken relationships between the film industry and business.

Today there are still Georgian companies whose business is based on deceit – They deceive actors, crews and studios alike. Four or five film studios were cheated in this way. Such "investors" disgrace the entire film industry, and this impacts Georgian filmmaking.

A lack of movie-theaters is also a serious problem. It is absurd that one movie-theater in Tbilisi has eight halls, while there isn't a single movie-theater in any other town or village in the country! Also, the selection process and screening of films is unclear. And how do they translate films? They often show films without dubbing, claiming that dubbing is expensive. This is cheating the audience.

Once we met a representative of Universal Pictures. Within the proposed agreement we had to buy twelve films per year and dub them. Dubbing was not very expensive and it was agreed that we would have the monopoly – yet we were deprived of this right. However, it started a process. If we had become representatives of Universal Pictures in Georgia, other studios would have started negotiations with other companies, and gradually it would have been possible to occupy the Caucasian market. Instead, movie theater owners boycotted Universal films. Movie theaters today are opposed to independent films, which causes problems. They conceal information about what audiences like, whereas producers are interested in this kind of information in order to make projects commercially profitable. We have learned that the Georgian National Film Center is interested in collecting information movie-goers opinions, though it is hard to obtain such data.

We need to prove to the production companies and investors that filmmaking is a profitable business. Currently – in order for a film to be profitable – it needs to be distributed in Europe

Strategy

We managed to acquire equipment and create the following strategy: We raised prices on equipment rentals since there was a lot of work at that time. Then when everyone saw it was more profitable to buy equipment themselves, other companies followed our example. So currently there are several technical film companies in Georgia. After that, we reduced rental rates again. This is how our studio influenced the creation of studios in Georgia.

In 2008 our studio started to produce films. We offer all kinds of local resources to our foreign partners and want to help other Georgian studios find foreign partners. We need to prove to the production companies and investors that filmmaking is a profitable business. Currently – in order for a film to be profitable – it needs to be distributed in Europe. To do this, European companies must contribute. The more sides that are involved in the project, the broader the distribution area and commercial profit.

This all concerns commercial films. How can locally produced films be developed?

ZM: Search for grants. Such films are much cheaper to make and often based on subsidies. An authored film project has to wait two years from project development to financing. During this time, everyone learns about the future film. The good thing is that astronomical amounts are no longer necessary to make good films.

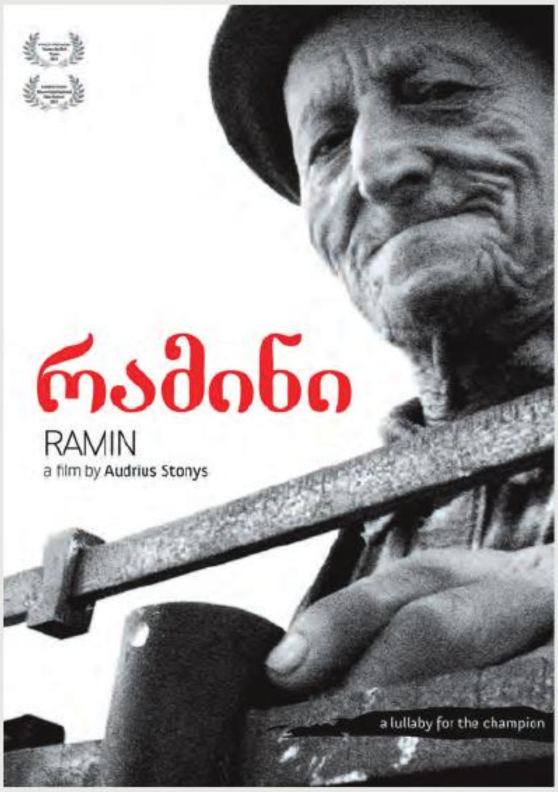
What is the minimum financing level needed to make a film?

ZM: A film can be made with any amount. For some you need a hundred dollars, while for others five million dollars is not enough. Another issue is whether the evaluation of the product is realistic. For example, in the 90s we produced Irakli Baghaturia's Monday. It was a ten-minute film, shot with professional actors, quality sound and editing. We made copies – and the film cost 15 rubles!

What did the 15 rubles cover?

ZM: For example we needed pies in one scene, and we paid for the pies. This kind of attitude is common in filmmaking as everyone tries to assist a young director free of charge, whether it's creative cooperation or technical issues. Otherwise no director would ever make his or her first film.

This is how Rusudan Glurjidze made her wonderful film Nocturne, which was successful at numerous international festivals. It's usual everywhere in the world to assist young filmmakers. About seventy young people participated in the production of our project "Farewell to Arms" and the film was a starting point for many young directors. For instance, Tornike Bziava's short film won about 36 prizes in international festivals and was named the Best European Short Film in 2011. With this project we expressed our gratitude to everyone in the production studio who had assisted us. ●



Ramin Lomsadze from Kvareli

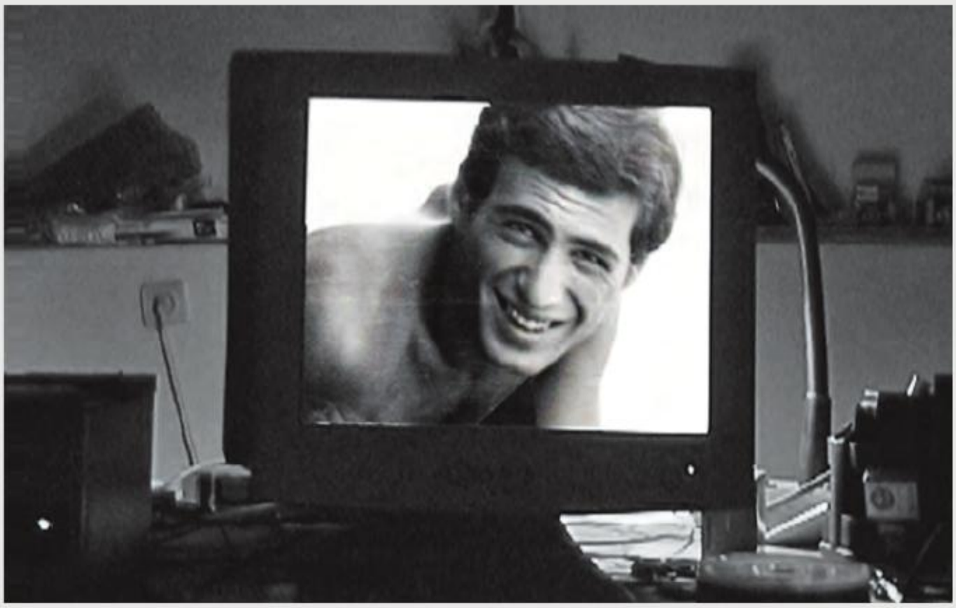
>> Irine Zhordania

Throughout the world there is a growing interest in documentary films. Even in feature films documentary devices have become frequent and contemporary cinema has crossed the genre borders as it tries to free itself from artistic clichés. Genuine stories and real characters attract more attention today. Documentary films reflect current political and social processes, and can even influence them. For instance, Werner Herzog's documentary film Into the Abyss: A Tale of Death, a Tale of Life is based on interviews with people who are sentenced to death; after the film appeared, many countries began to discuss revising death penalty laws. The Russian project Term by Pavel Kostmarov and Alexey Rastorguev reflects social and political life in Russia and fulfills the function of mass media at the same time. Documentary films often deal with stories and passions that are beyond our imagination and can significantly exceed feature films in their acuteness.

However, Ramin is a very different kind of film, far from any severe social problems – it just tells the story of a concrete person, the Georgian wrestler Ramin Lomsadze. In his youth, he won seven matches in fifty-five seconds or less. This is his birthday. His eyes are still shining, and time has not changed them. It's one "documentary day" seen in an artistic way. The camera enters his room and approaches his bedside. Everything focuses intensely on Ramin, leaving generalization almost impossible. However, without any parallels or all-embracing truisms, the film reflects what is most valuable – Man.

"In films, the main character either moves towards love or towards death," Krzysztof Zanussi once said in a masterclass. This is true with Ramin, but the only difference is that he moves towards life. On his 75th birthday he travels to return his love – he goes to seek a woman he once loved and lost. He travels to villages, asks people about the woman and what became of her.

This is the first joint Georgian-Lithuanian film, directed by the Lithuanian Audrius Stonys. The Georgian co-author of the script is Givi Odisharia. The film has already been awarded at festivals and film forums and this year it has been submitted for an Oscar nomination for best foreign film. According to the director, the secret of the film's success lies in its main character, Ramin Lomsadze. Last year the film was shown at the Tbilisi International Film Festival and the Premiere was attended by the main character himself... I wondered if he had found the lady he was looking for?! ●



America in One Room >> Nika Gabedava

Willis Conover's radio program "Jazz Hour" and the magazine America were like keyholes in a closed space from which the West seemed tremendously beautiful. The generation of the 1980s and 90s, often called the "lost generation" in the Soviet world, squinted at the world through this keyhole, seeing nothing but freedom. "America is ideal!" was believed everywhere, including Tbilisi. Here, even listening to jazz seemed like crossing a border. However, some who believed America was an ideal country with unrestricted freedoms became disillusioned, and Davit Kandelaki's film One-Room America tells the story of such a person. This documentary is the story of a Georgian architect, Nikoloz Koka Gegechkori, who has been in New York's Sing-Sing Prison since 1994, sentenced to life imprisonment for murder. According to some he is not guilty, however, and a telephone conversation with the prisoner tells Koka's story. The film director draws a realistic picture of America. The audience is shown that an ideal "West" is just an illusion, and that America is as cold as the rest of the world. The reality makes spectators empathetic with the prisoner and disillusioned by any ideal "country of freedom".

It tells about a French woman, a photographer, who fell in love with Koka, left France and her career for the sake of this love. She moved to America and even today is trying to plead Koka's innocence, but in vain. His friends are interviewed in the film and say he is unjustly punished for a murder he didn't commit.

The film is divided into chapters, and in each Koka speaks about the hardships he has been through: how he was wounded and what was happening in Tbilisi in the 90s; about his genuine regrets. The film is both sad and intriguing as Koka's story and that of his generation are told in an original way. There is no sense of time, which makes the story universal. Koka's fate is purposely kept unclear until the end, as the director is not only interested in Koka's own tragedy but also in the fate of the entire generation that lived in the former USSR during those years, dreaming of freedom. The film tells of a person who found himself in the "country of freedom", but who – ironically – found himself in prison.

What does America mean now to Koka? It is just "one room". The audience realizes that for Koka freedom is non-existent, and that there is only the shadow of freedom called "The Statue Of Liberty". ●

Photo: Niko Tarielashvili

Dito Tsintsadze's "Invasion" Awarded at Montreal Film Festival

>> Ketevan Giorgobiani

Dito Tsintadze's new film was awarded the special Grand Prix of the Jury at the International Film Festival in Montreal. A joint creation between the Georgian director and Georgian actor, Merab Ninidze (Mediator), Invasion enters the market as a German-Austrian coproduction.

The story takes place in a practically locked away space, the house of Burghart Klaussner (The Man from the Embassy). About ten characters create a micro-society within this space, living withdrawn from the outer world. Similar scenarios are brought to mind from cinema and literature, such as Visconti's Family Portrait in the Interior and Cortazar's House Taken Over. According to the director, however, Invasion is a film-metaphor about contemporary Europe.

In the process of editing you told me you would present Invasion first at high-class authoritative festivals and then, if this plan failed, present the film at less prestigious but commercially more interesting festivals. What was finally the fate of the film's "coming out"?

DT: Montreal is officially considered an A-class festival, although it is art-house and not commercial. People from Hollywood rarely visit this festival, and this year two more German productions participated. I regret that Invasion is not called a Georgian film, since it is a German-Austrian coproduction.

Can we assess Invasion as a politically correct film? Recently the theme has become topical not only in society at large, but also in art. Was the film perceived correctly?

DT: I was happy that the audience perceived the film exactly as I wanted. When they realized that Invasion is a metaphor about modern Europe, their reaction was very interesting and positive. One Canadian critic said the film was very significant for Europe as such, which was a positive comment.

Invasion is the second joint creation by you and Merab Ninidze. What can you say about actors?

DT: Yes, Merab and I have planned lots of projects, although we have implemented only Mediator and Invasion so far. I have worked with the best European actors, yet I think Merab Ninidze and Giorgi Nakashidze are as talented as Burghart Klaussner and Christof Waltz. Merab is luckier, as he speaks German and is known to foreign audiences. There are many Georgian actors I would be happy to work with. The role in Invasion was created especially for Merab. The script of a future film which will be shot beginning in November, was written for Lasha Bakradze.

I don't follow any rules while selecting actors. Lasha Bakradze had no equal in Lost Killers. As for Burghart Klaussner, Merab Ninidze and Giorgi Nakashidze, they are real professionals. Sometimes actors like Lasha Bakradze are cut out for the role. Everything is defined by an individual and concrete case.

The characters of your films are mostly multinational. This film was not an exception. Why are you so interested in mixing cultures?

DT: Because I myself have experienced it. I know what emigration means, have lived in Germany for more than ten years. Besides, Europe has recently become very multicultural. There are no longer purely "French" or "German" stories. Therefore, I like to tell multicultural stories and I have a certain sensitivity to them. Take the characters of the film – Konstantine Saakadze acts as a result of his experience. As I look back, their features and behavior remind me of myself. Certainly, Merab's character is exaggerated, although when I arrived in Europe I also lived with friends, borrowed their things and so on. I wonder where the boundary between politeness and rudeness is, and how all this can be used in concrete situations... If he combines rudeness and politeness, he has more chances to survive in society.

There are usually no strictly positive or negative characters in your films. All the characters in Invasion arouse antipathy, however. In the case of Nınıdze's character, aversion reaches its peak. The only character for whom the audience feels sympathy is the Romanian girl, played by Austrian singer Anna F. What kind of character is she?

DT: This girl's role allows several interpretations. She is not purely positive, as she becomes a murderer at a certain moment, yet her actions can be justified as being caused by her maternal instinct to save her child. In the end, this girl is the winner. The entire subject line is drawn around her, and she plays the main role in the climax too.

You had not finished editing when you said that the final scene was ready. What does the final scene mean to you, not only with regard to Invasion but in general?

DT: The final scene is very important. The ending of the film On the Edge turns the entire story upside down. In Fear of Shooting the final scene gathers all the threads of the story. It depends on the film: in some cases it is necessary to surprise the audience while in others a logical end is preferable. The ending of Invasion is logical and unambiguous.

My aim here was to "bother" the audience, and if they want to watch certain episodes again, I consider I have reached my aim.

Photo: Niko Tarielashvili

I wish to show the film Invasion to Georgian audiences, so if there is interest here I'll be happy

Do you plan to bring Invasion to Georgia?
DT: Certainly, I wish to show the film Invasion to Georgian audiences, so if there is interest here I'll be happy.

Let's discuss your two Georgian films Reverse and Mediator. The first was considered a less "serious" project by the authors. However, it turned into one of the most scandalous films in recent Georgian cinema. The second, a high-budget film, was practically a failure. What was the reason?
DT: "Scandalous" is an ambiguous word, and no one treated Reverse without due seriousness. It was simply a low-budget film, made in a short period. Its aim was to make the audience laugh at themselves. Personally I regret that Reverse became popular not for elements of animation , the theme, or the attempts to mix various devices, but for a totally insignificant aspect of the film.

I find it difficult to talk about the reasons for Mediator's failure. For me as a director, the process of working on this film was an extremely interesting experience. I tried new forms of editing: I told the same story from the viewpoints of several characters. To tell the truth, I was surprised at the failure of this project. I tried to show the lives of several characters in a certain situation to show how they depart from each other without learning about each other's existence. At the same time, they have their own stories. This is the same in real life. Probably the failure of Mediator was due to my attempt to combine commercial and art-house genres in one film and we probably failed to achieve the golden mean. The idea was quite ambitious. Apart from these issues, the actors performed their roles brilliantly.

You frequently compose music for your films. However, the music for Invasion was composed by the late Georgian composer Gio Tsintsadze. You cooperated with him for years...
DT: This is true. This music is one of Giorgi's last works, a kind of farewell. There are only two musical themes in the film. Gio could not think of the title for the final melody and I suggested he call it "Farewell". I wanted to dedicate this film to three of my deceased friends, whose names appear in the final credits. That's what I meant then, however it turned out to be Gio's farewell. I may be subjective, but the music is very compelling. It's hard for me to listen to it – I feel that Gio is telling me goodbye. ●

Still from the Film "Invasion"

Roles, Prizes, Thoughts in Front of the Camera: Merab Ninidze

>> Ketevan Machavariani

In mid-November 2012 I had a virtual interview with Merab Ninidze. The previous issue of Film Print offered an in-depth dialogue with him, and this time we discussed his recent success as main role in Dito Tsintsadze's new film Invasion. He was awarded a Gold Angel for Best Actor at the international film festival in Saint Petersburg. Invasion had won a special Grand Prix of the Jury at the Montreal Film Festival. At the time we talked, Merab had not yet seen the film. He was eager to see it along with the Georgian audience at the closing of the Tbilisi Film Festival.

MN: I couldn't go to the Festival in Saint Petersburg, so Dito was to accept the prize, and I asked him to make a speech on my behalf. Actually they forgot to call on Dito up, and skipped to the Best Actress. She pointed out that she is not the same as the Best Actor, Merab Ninidze!

This is Dito Tsintsadze's second film for you. The first was Mediator. In my opinion, that film was no less interesting than Invasion, and the same can be said about your roles in both films. However, Invasion was more successful.

M.N.: I find it embarrassing to speak of films I've been in, but Mediator is really very special. When I saw it I liked its black humor, the tension and great narrative. In short, I do like the film. However, films have their fates. I, as a

The characters in this film do strange things and treat each other in unusual ways, but to them it seems normal. That's why I call my character demonic

spectator, cannot yet evaluate Invasion, as I know nothing about its texture or image. Dito has one special feature – you feel free and confident with him. He motivates you to do things easily and you never feel tense. He encourages you and involves you in the creative process and you feel you are the author and not just an actor sitting around waiting for the director's orders. Dito is as emotionally charged as a child.

My role in the film was a bit unusual. I was a generalized character, something negative, even demonic. This is the first time I have performed this type of role. I have been a "good guy" more often, so when Dito offered this role and I read the script, it took me a while to adjust to the image and enter the character's soul like you enter a new skin.

For you as an actor this must have been a challenge?
M.N.: The characters in this film do strange things and treat each other in unusual ways, but to them it seems normal. That's why I call my character demonic. I'm not saying they are bad and we are good, but they are all driven by some demonic force. But I won't give the film away…

The role was in German like all the other dialogues. It was irritating, because Dito and I communicated in Georgian and then I had to translate everything to my colleagues. Sometimes this got on my nerves. When I discussed it with the director, I grasped what had to be done, but then I had to translate and it was annoying.

My character has a Georgian name, but nationality means nothing in this film—it's arbitrary. Dito just retained my actor's nationality and I perform a Georgian, but there isn't a single Georgian phrase in the film. There's only a little piece from a popular Georgian song about the rain. The five characters in the film each have a theme. Unlike my previous film (Rezo Gigineishvili's Love with an Accent), this film will not have a huge audience, but it's a totally different kind of cinema.

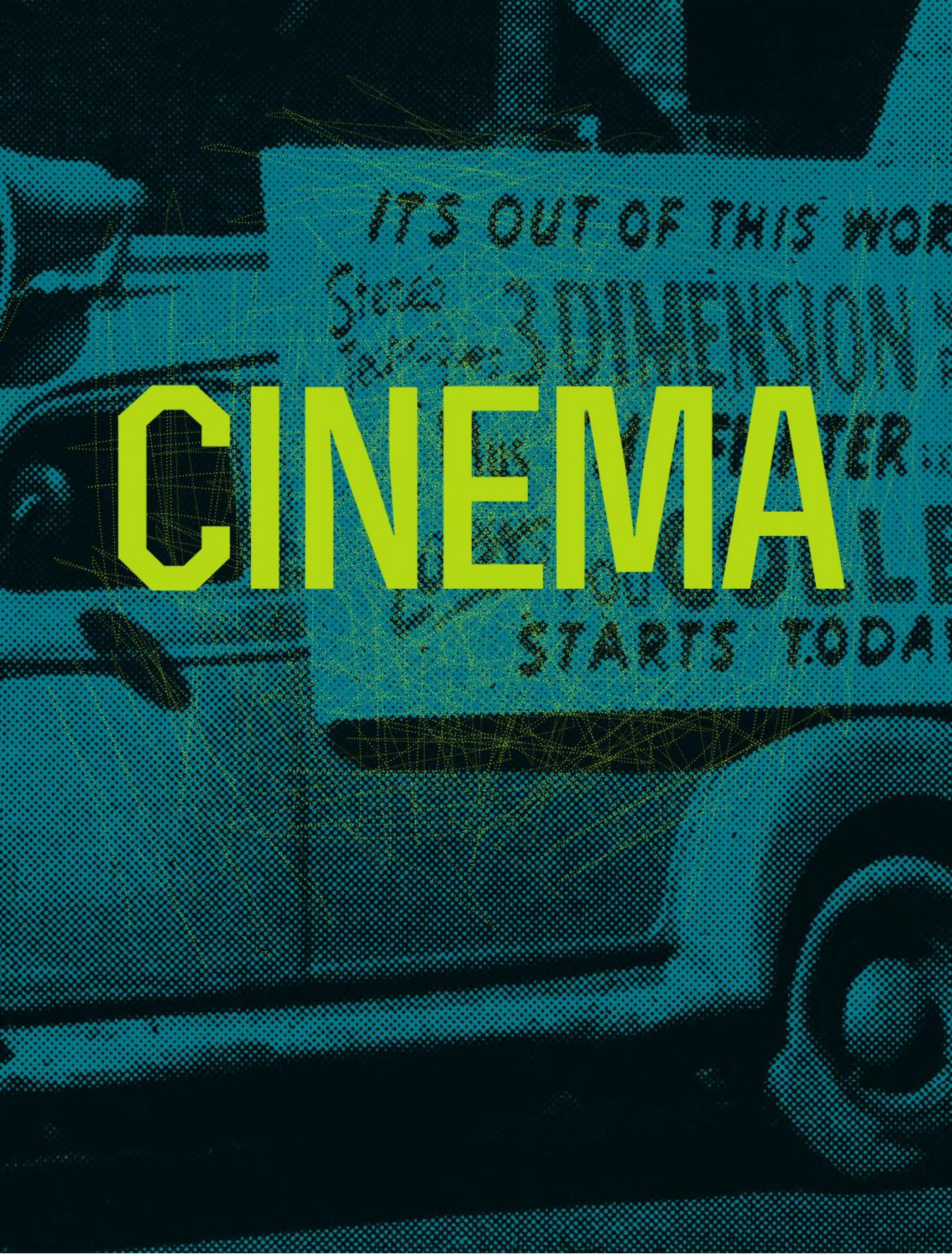
Does this matter for you as an actor?
M.N.: I never thought about it. If I think about the audience when I am standing in front of the camera then everything will lose its meaning. If an actor imagines how many people will see him after the film is made he might get frightened and run away! Even if you think that only your friends and relatives will see the film it's still embarrassing!

However, in the beginning of your career millions of people saw you in Tenghiz Abuladze's Repentance.
M.N.: That was surreal. We couldn't understand what was happening until the main crew members received automobiles worth 5000 rubles! I couldn't drive yet, and sold my car in two hours. It was an overwhelming success, and I, as a 17-year-old actor, was part of it.
Which film will you play in next?
M.N.: In a film by Alexey German, Jr. called Below the Electric Cloud. German works with long intervals, for example filming took place in May but didn't continue till August. It will probably be finished soon. It consists of several short stories and I play a Hussar in one. I liked the idea of a Georgian Hussar in the present day, where I am a guide dressed in a Hussar uniform explaining the story of an old mansion to Chinese, Turkish and other tourists. In one scene I even speak Chinese, which was extremely hard. I even tried to turn my back to the camera!

Soon I'll be playing in a film shot in Hamburg called In the Enemy's Camp, based on a bestseller about international terrorism. I play the Minister of Interior Affairs in the Gaddafi government. The Minister hides in Hamburg and the police search for him, but cannot identify him. My character assures them he is not the wanted person. The entire film is based on dualism and I think it will be exciting…

On December 8 spectators had the opportunity to watch Invasion. Some are waiting for it to appear on pirate sites, and yet others may see it in Europe. We will learn about Merab's new roles from festival announcements in 2013. Then, after a long and winding way, these films will reach Georgian audiences. ●

SPECIAL


CINEMA
IT'S OUT OF THIS
STARTS

Finally At Home 80 Years Later
Kulturfilm Buba = Georgian History + The History of Georgian Cinema

>> Lela Ochiauri

There are some frequently used definitions in Georgian film history – "The Dawn of Georgian Cinema", "The Pioneers of Georgian Cinema", "The Innovators of Georgian Cinema"...

Georgians like to underline that something is "the first", and happens "for the first time", or someone "Was the first to do something"...I will follow this logic and use these favorite Georgian expressions, as the film discussed here is related to "The Dawn of a New Georgia", the foundation of a new (although destructive) state, the introduction of a new way of life, and the first years of the development of Soviet cinema. Thus it is one of the "First" films.

The author of the film is Nutsa Ghoghoberidze (also known as Nino Khutsishvili) - the first Georgian female film director.

This is one of the first articles about Ghoghoberidze and her film Buba. Research and analysis of Buba was carried out by film historian Eter Okujava in the book David Kakabadze in Theater and Cinema.

Lasha Bakradze, a specialist in German philology and Director of the Giorgi Leonidze Georgian State Museum of Literature, published an article "Nutsa Ghoghoberidze (1902-1966)- the First Female Georgian Director" in Hot Chocolate magazine. In this article he brought all existing documents to light. The novelty of the article in the fact that the biography of the author is directly linked to Georgian reality, and to the story told in the film, which exposes history from several angles – personal, social, artistic and cinematographic.

Georgians also like terms such as "coming alive", "resurrection", and "discovery" – "the audience has never seen" etc. These phrases express the processes Buba is currently undergoing with regard to audiences, society, culture and life.

The Soviet Union, a state run by the Communists for 70 years, no longer exists. There are no more commissars or repressions, no more "gulags" or executions of passionate, idealist Bolsheviks, no more Soviet ideology, no more governmental decrees, sessions or directives. Prohibitions are a matter of the past—and most hidden materials have come to light. However, the film created by the first female Georgian director has only returned to life 80 years after it was produced.

While working on archive materials, Lasha Bakradze discovered the film by chance. According to him, a copy of Buba was ordered from "Gosfilmfond" (where all Soviet films are kept) in the 1980s. However, despite its return to Georgia, the film was shown only twice, in narrow circles – then forgotten again, perhaps due to the hardships of the 1990s. Without Lasha Bakradze, the film would have remained forgotten for many years more.

Apart from some fragments kept in the National Archives, there was no other copy of the film in Georgia. The documentary and archive materials about Buba and its director are scarce. Why didn't Buba find favor with the Soviet authorities, and why was it condemned to anonymity? Strangely enough, a film that fulfilled all the criteria of Soviet ideology and censorship and conformed to the decrees of the Communist Party was nearly lost. It almost failed to become part of the history of Georgian cinema!

The reason is that the producer, Nutsa Ghoghoberidze, was repressed by the state, and spent 10 years in exile. It was natural that the Soviet authorities did their best to conceal work by a "public enemy", especially because films were seen as the best means of mass propaganda. This is why information concerning both the film and its author was annihilated. When the epoch of repressions came to an end, everyone had forgotten the first female Georgian director. Even the director herself forgot her "old life" and profession. After returning from exile she started life anew, but unfortunately died at the age of 62.

Nutsa Ghoghoberidze became a film director at the age of 25. She was the only woman working for "Sakhkinmretsvi" (the Georgian State Film Production Company). Her career started with documentary films. Her first film, made jointly with Mikheil Kalatozishvili in 1928, was Their Kingdom and illustrates a style characteristic of the period and is based on ideological principles of the

Nutsa Gogoberidze
photo from family
archive

Still from the Film "Buba"

time. It is said that Ghoghoberidze could not resist the creative force of the author of Jim Shvante, Kalatozishvili.

His influence is also obvious in her independent film Buba, created in 1930, based on her own script. The art director is Davit Kakabadze, the director of photography is Sergo Zabozlaev; it stars Kutaisi theater actor Petre Chichinadze and inhabitants of the village of Ghebi in Racha. The style was realist, as the language of cinema was being developed at the time, and directors used real life in their search of the language, experiments and images. The theme reflected in Buba resembles that of Jim Shvante; the story is similar and the events also take place in a mountainous region.

Buba consists of five parts. This documentary film is distinguished by its original narrative style. A tourist is walking and enjoying the landscapes of Racha, drinking the fresh water of mountain springs and becoming acquainted with the local lifestyle. His impressions are "voiced" in propaganda-style rhetoric, with politically correct subtitles, although a hidden irony can be perceived during the film.

As with Jim Shvante, the art director Davit Kakabadze defined the physical-artistic side of Buba. The director, art director and director of photography address the principles of edited-poetic cinema, which were new principles and popular both in Georgian and foreign films of that period. All artistic elements are used to build the cinematographic structure of the film: perspective, alternation of landscapes and shooting spots, specific lighting, narration and portraits, ethnographic studies, diagonal frames and so on.

Buba is one of the highest snow-covered peaks of Racha, and serves as the title of the film. It is a metaphor for harsh and uncontrolled nature and the impact of calamities on human fate.

In general, "kulturfilm" is an educational or propaganda-type genre. Buba represents this genre and introduces the audience to Racha, its nature and rich mineral waters, and yet reflects on the hardships of the population of mountainous villages there through the village of Ghebi. In a more general sense, the film reveals the hard life of old Geor-

Still from the Film "cheerless"

gia. Peasants worked from dawn till dusk, children had to work hard too, and mothers had no time to raise their children, as they worked in the field all day. Fathers went far away to fell trees and earn their daily bread, and corn fields were destroyed by landslides. The New Reality was seen as a better life! The elements of nature were tamed, electric power stations were built, resorts and spas were constructed. The workers spent their holidays comfortably, forgot about hardships and drank mineral waters. The children were entertained instead of picking nettles and longing for their parents' attention. Instead of crying, they had fun, laughed, danced and sang.

This method of contrast between the old and new life is characteristic of the first decade of Soviet cinema. It was obligatory to show the audience what a marvelous life the new regime had brought, and film directors had to follow this principle.

Nutsa Ghoghoberidze as a director fell victim to her epoch and had to surrender to ideological bondage. Buba is an example of confrontation and the creative search.

Ghoghoberidze was in fact from Kakhi – a Georgian village in Azerbaijan. She was born in 1902 or 1903 and when she was six, her parents, three brothers and five sisters moved to Tbilisi. Nino got a decent education, finished school, learned Russian, French and German. She entered the Department of Philosophy of Tbilisi State University and continued her studies in Jena, Germany. On returning to her homeland, she became interested in cinema – a new, progressive and popular art – and became a film director. According to existing records, she managed to create only three films (between 1928 and 1934) including two documentaries called Their Kingdom with Mikheil Kalatozishvili and Buba, as well as a feature film called Surly. Nutsa Ghoghoberidze's heritage consists of these three films and six stories. The collection of her stories Train of Happiness was issued by Intellect Publishing House at the end of 2001. At Lasha Bakradze's initiative, the presentation of this book and the screening of Buba were held at the Museum of Literature. The stories described in the film and the book, like the fate of their author, reflect

the history of our country and serve as a reminder of the past that constantly sends us warning signals.

Once she visited her brother's (Razhsden Khutsishvili) family and met her sister-in-law's brother, Levan Ghoghoberidze, a young Communist who worked in various high-ranking positions over several years. She fell in love with him and they married. What was the end of this love story?

In some ways it seems like an ordinary story, even sentimental, sad and melodramatic. However, the fate of a person and her entire country is contained in it. The tragedy and severity of Nutsa Ghoghoberidze's story reflect the fate of many Georgians. If we evaluate her life in a more romantic and less cynical way, we see a heroic woman – a young woman with a baby, abandoned by her husband (who after her detention advised her to declare they had separated and had nothing in common), who decided to share the fate of the person she had loved. There are other similar examples in history.

Lana Ghoghoberidze, the daughter of Nutsa and Levan Ghoghoberidze, explains her mother's behaviour in a touching way:

"After detention, Father wrote a letter to my mother (the two letters we received from him were written on a torn sheet from a cigarette box and hidden in the lining of dirty clothes). The letter said, "Write that we are divorced and in this way you will escape imprisonment. Think about Lana and write as I tell you." He himself had given made this statement in prison.

However, mother chose not to follow his advice. Nutsa Ghoghoberidze thought it would be an immoral step and felt she had to share her husband's fate and repent with him. Nutsa Ghoghoberidze sentenced herself, and punished herself unjustly. She made a sacrifice for a crime she had not committed. She punished herself for having loved a convicted criminal and being an indirect part of his crimes. She had loved an executioner who was later tortured by his comrades, like many other Bolsheviks.

"Repentance – this word was deep and personal to my mother," wrote Lana Ghoghoberidze in the preface to a collection of her mother's stories. "She had to repent her husband's Bolshevist faith, which she herself had never shared... But how? Only through imprisonment and exile." ●

Titsian Tabidze,
Nutsa Gogoberidze and
Aleksander Digmelashvili, Still from the Film
"cheerless"
photos from family
archive

Nutsa Gogoberidze
photo from family
archive

Film Discoveries

>> Nino Dzandzava

Working on a film restoration or conservation project can be adventurous. As the work goes on, restorers carry out research as they manage technical problems, and frequently they discover new details about the history of films. In some cases they even discover films that were considered lost—this happened in a GNFC project as I searched the catalogue of the State Film Fund and came across the title A Nail in the Boot. I thought it was a mistake, and told Lasha Bakradze that this film had been destroyed. Then I wrote to Sofia Dmitrieva who worked for a Russian intermediary company, and she confirmed that the film still existed. Of course we included A Nail in the Boot on the list of films to be restored. However, I still had doubts until we actually obtained a copy via diplomatic pouch from the Georgian Embassy in Russia. I was very nervous, as it was hard to believe that I was really holding a box containing Kalatozishvili's film! I believe the employees of the Russian State Film Fund also learned about the film later, when they watched it in Pordenone, Italy at the Festival of Silent Films in 2010.

Kalatozishvili's family members, as well as Georgian film historians, thought A Nail in the Boot had been destroyed by the Communist censors. When Misha Kalatozishvili, grandson of the great Georgian director and also a film director, came to the Film Center, he was amazed to learn the film had survived. In 2009 Georgian audiences had the opportunity to see the film, and the following year it was shown at the Festival of Silent Films in Pordenone. It was the discovery of the festival! Russian film historian, Sergey Kapteriov, presented this film along with Jim Shvante. Again at the initiative of the Russians, a program of six Georgian silent films was presented in Pordenone in 2011.

Risks Related to Old Films

Imagine an elegantly-dressed lady lighting a cigarette in the 1920s, 30s and 40s. A beautiful, though not very expensive, string of beads is around her neck, and she brings a lighted match close to the beads. She changes hands and puts the cigarette in the other hand, keeping it close to her waist, which is decorated with beautiful buttons. She moves the cigarette with her fingers as she calmly talks to her friend. Strangely enough, such simple movements carried risks, as during this period film tape was used to make nail varnish, hair-combs, buttons, beads and other things. These facts can be confirmed by texts by the first archivists and also by a Jonas Mekas film made in the 1960s about film archivist Henri Langlois, a film which was unexpectedly popular in Georgia.

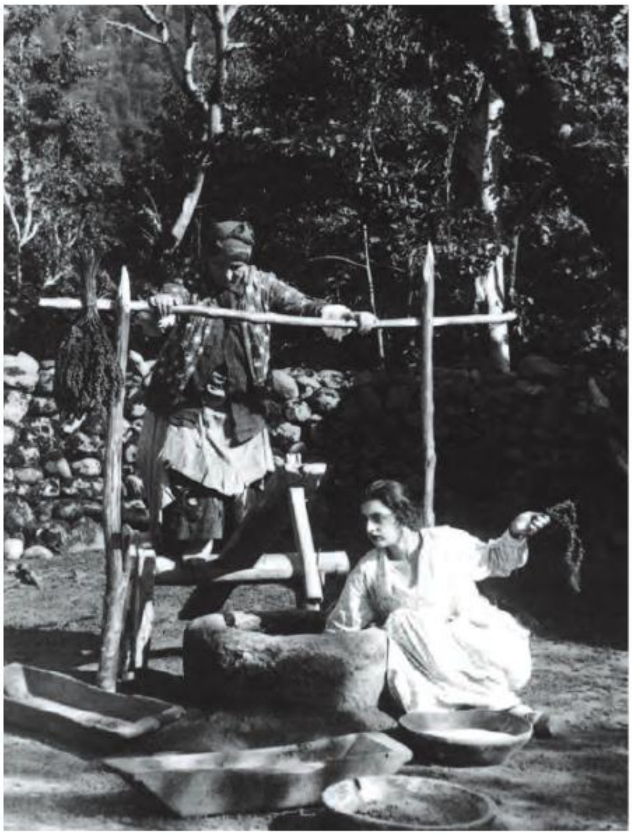
The year 1951 was important for the history of cinema because that was the year the USA prohibited the use of nitrate-based film. Soon the European film industry followed this example, but the Soviet Union went on using nitrate-based film until the end of the 60s. Films preserved in the Georgian National Archives were nitrate-based until 1968. This Film is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film is a 720-page book written by Roger Smither about how this type of film was developed, and took nine years to write. It explains that although no other film base was as expressive, magically white, and vivid in images as a nitrate base, it was very flammable. The book tells how the love of cinema was related to courage – until the film industry took measures to eliminate the risk and established strict safety measures.

Along with the supporters of using old films, some Americans and Europeans considered that the films should go on living even after their theatrical release (James Card, Iris Berry, Henri Langlois, Ernest Lindgren). They worked out problems with the authorities and did their best to create the first film museums, libraries and cinematheques. They searched for old films in trash-bins and elsewhere, saving thousands of reels that are now available for amateurs of cinema in the original format.

The invention of television also served this noble cause because the bosses of television and film industries realized they could make large profits by show-

Stills from the Films "Nail in the Boot" 1931 and "Arsena, the Brigand" 1923

Crew of the Film "Nail in the Boot" 1931
Stills from the Film "Who is the Guilty" 1925



ing old films on TV. This phenomenon pushed owners of studios to search for old films in their archives, and a new market opened for old films. This is still going on, and film studios sell their libraries for billions of dollars and invest large amounts in the restoration of old films. Although – unlike archives – studios restore films chiefly for commercial purposes, everyone agrees that films are part of our cultural heritage just as much as paintings and other art preserved in the Prado, the Louvre and museums everywhere.

The main activities of audiovisual archives are meant to protect films and ensure their availability. For this there are activities that have to be carried out with knowledge of the practical and theoretical history of cinema. For instance, protection includes conserving old prints, ensuring climatic control and other procedures, researching materials, printing new copies, reconstruction, restoration and proper maintenance of old films. This process is the only way to guarantee that the films are protected, and if it isn't carried out properly, films will "die", because they are an unstable physical and chemical media. Even films created in a digital format are at risk, even in case of protection. Without proper maintenance films cannot retain their physical integrity and are quickly damaged. Georgian institutions that own film collections fail to carry out the correct procedures for protecting films. Of course restoration is expensive, and some projects would need a budget of ten thousand dollars, while others can cost more than 600,000 Euros, for example in the case of the restoration of Metropolis by Martin Koerber.

In the last twenty years only a few projects of film preservation have been carried out in Georgia. One of these was the restoration of Akaki Tsereteli's Trip to Racha and Lechkhumi (1912) initiated by Nana Janelidze and Marina Kereselidze. Another project of this kind was implemented by the Film Heritage Protection Department of the Georgian National Film Center in 2006-2009. The project title was "Preparation of Copies of Old Georgian Films", financed by UNESCO. Projection prints of four old Georgian films were made within this project. For two of the films, copies of negatives (double negative) were made. The four films are Young Pilot (1928, directed by Nikoloz Kakhidze), The Brigand Arsena (1923, directed by Vladimir Barski), Who Is Guilty? (1925, directed by Alexandre Tsutsunava) and A Nail in the Boot (1931, directed by Mikheil Kalatozishvili).

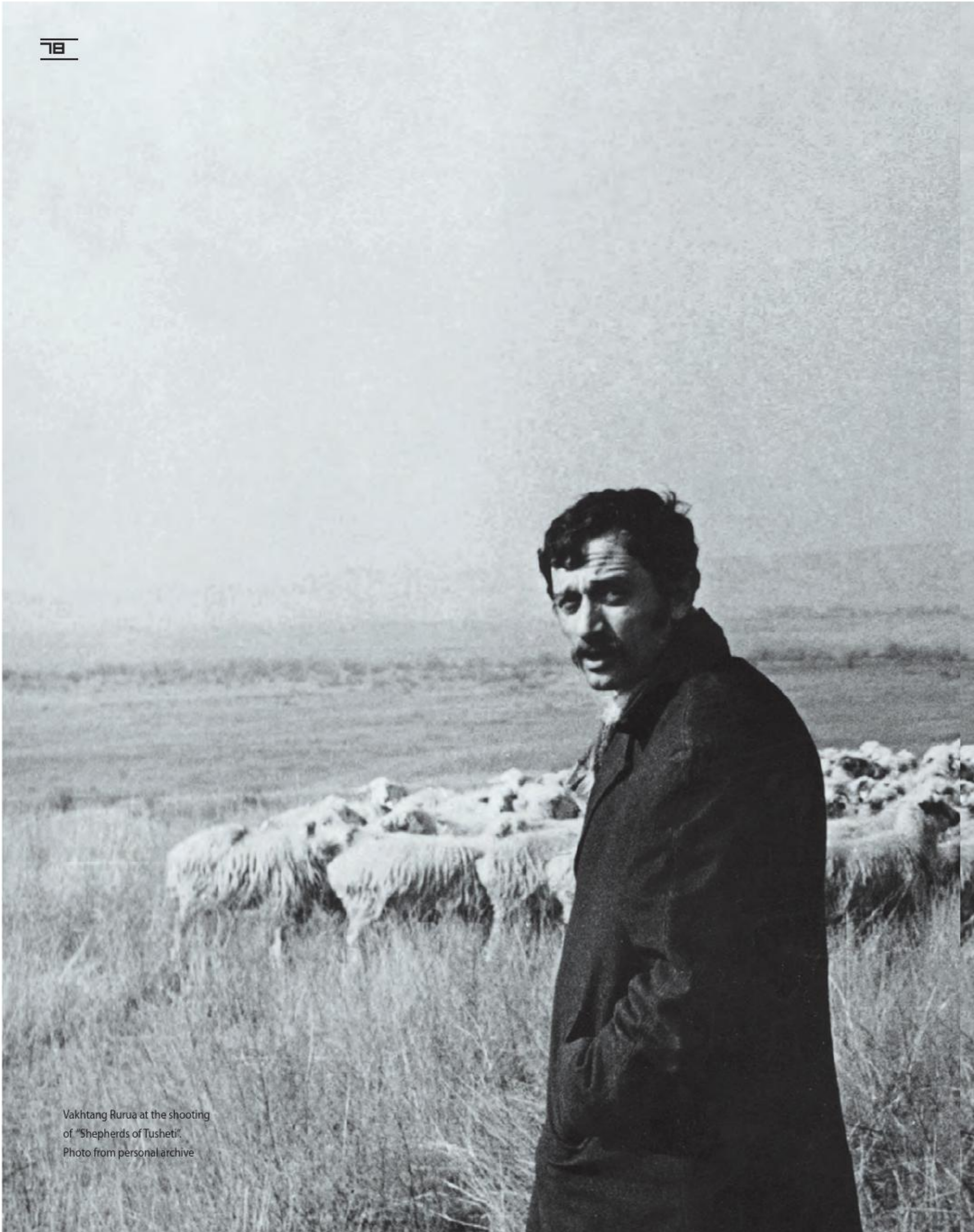
In the Soviet epoch, films produced by Georgian studios were sent to the Russian film archives "Gosfilmfond". Therefore, all copies of the four restored films were made in Gosfilmfond laboratory and Georgians were unable to attend the restoration process in the Russian laboratory. Moreover, there is only one intermediary company which enables cooperation with the Russians and is responsible for all the work.

The selection of films for restoration was based on several criteria: Georgian audiences had never seen complete versions of films created by the famous directors, Nikoloz Kakhhidze, Vladimir Barski, Alexandre Tsutsunava and Mikheil Kalatozishvili. This was because of the scarcity of films in Georgian archives and the lack of facilities for showing non-commercial films in Georgia. Many films made in the 1920s were subject to Soviet censorship, thus two of them – Young Pilot and A Nail in the Boot were never shown officially. Although the latter, Kalatozishvili's film, was a marvelous example of Soviet propaganda, it was prohibited because of a review in Proletarskoe Kino magazine in 1932, which stated that "the film created a bad image of the Red Army".

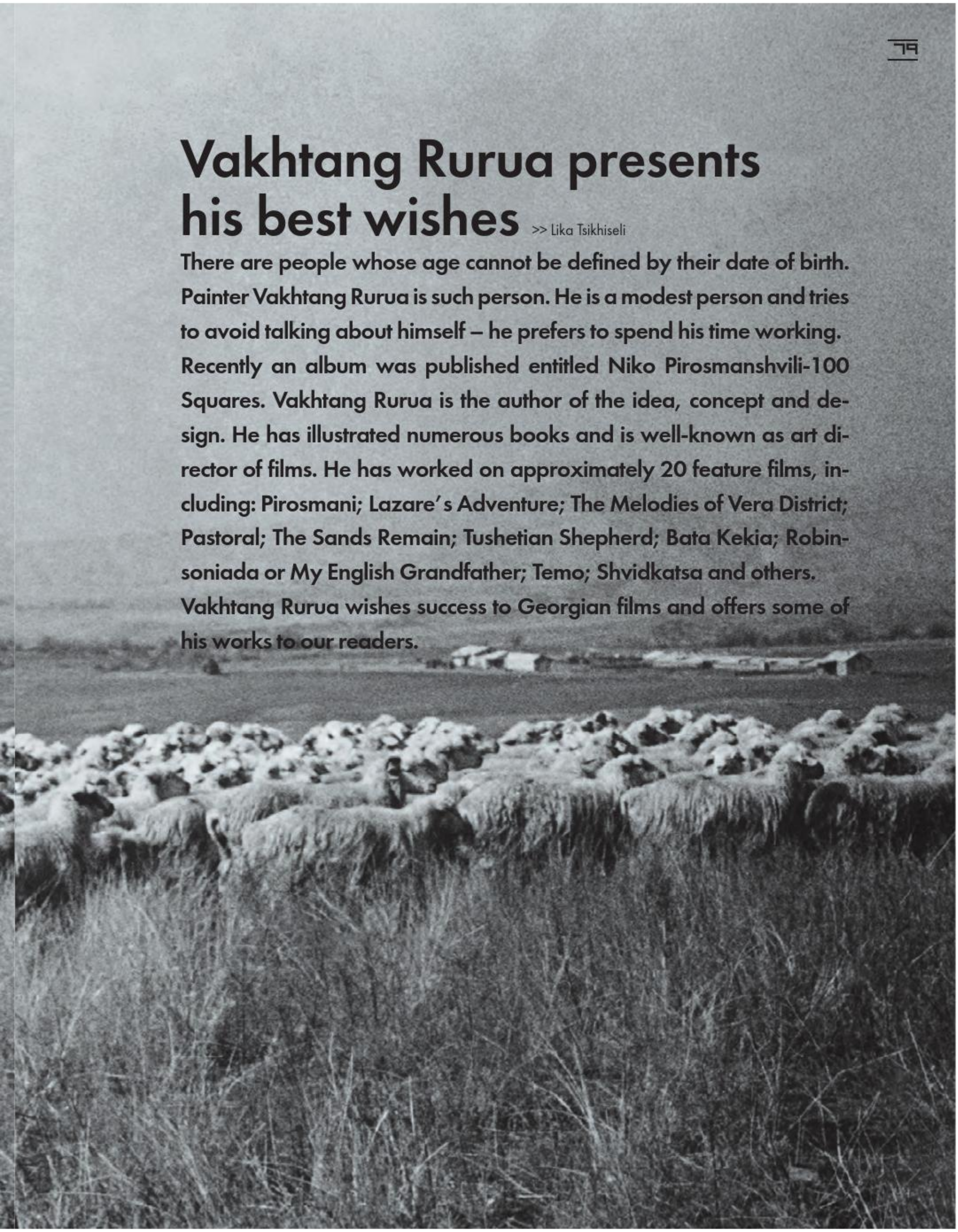
Vladmir Barski's film The Outlaw Arsena also fell victim to Soviet censorship. The film was made in 1923 when rebel characters were extremely popular in those early years of Georgian cinema. The same story was used in Mikheil Chaureli's film Arsena made in 1937. On April 21, 1933 the Creative Political Council of Georgian Film Production Company discussed the issue of prohibited films. The films banned at the time were: Arsena Jorjiashvili", The Outlaw Arsena, Patricide, Surami Fortress and Lost Treasure. The Council decided to release all the films with the exception of Vladimir Barski's The Outlaw Arsena. No reasons were given for maintaining the prohibition.

Alexandre Tsutsunava's Who Is Guilty? made in 1925, based on Nino Nakashidze's play, was not subject to prohibition but faced another challenge. Initially the film was planned in two parts, but, for commercial reasons, it was made as a one-part film. The Creative Council in Tbilisi demanded that it be reduced in length, thus an abridged version was sent to Moscow, where a representative of Georgian film production a certain Comrade Arustanov – cut out many episodes without the director's consent. Tsutsunava was so infuriated by Arustanov's behavior that he decided to renounce authorship of the film. Arustanov even changed the title of the film to Caucasian Horsemen, but in Russian theaters the film was released as Wild West Rider. In 1966 Director Kote Grdzelishvili restored, processed and voiced the film, although it was still released under the Russian title. In the 1960s it was fashionable to voice silent films in Georgia and, strange as it may seem, voicing was considered as restoration of films.

In 2009 the Film Heritage Protection Department offered the original version of these four restored films to the audiences. They were shown during the Tbilisi International Film Festival and all four were accompanied by live music. The theaters were full for all four films. This was a rare example of the restoration of old, forgotten films in Georgia. This cause will hopefully continue when the films are produced and sold in DVD format. ●



Vakhtang Rurua at the shooting
of "Shepherds of Tusheti".
Photo from personal archive



Vakhtang Rurua presents his best wishes

>> Lika Tsikhiseli

There are people whose age cannot be defined by their date of birth. Painter Vakhtang Rurua is such person. He is a modest person and tries to avoid talking about himself – he prefers to spend his time working. Recently an album was published entitled Niko Pirosmanshvili-100 Squares. Vakhtang Rurua is the author of the idea, concept and design. He has illustrated numerous books and is well-known as art director of films. He has worked on approximately 20 feature films, including: Pirosmani; Lazare's Adventure; The Melodies of Vera District; Pastoral; The Sands Remain; Tushetian Shepherd; Bata Kekia; Robinsoniada or My English Grandfather; Temo; Shvidkatsa and others. Vakhtang Rurua wishes success to Georgian films and offers some of his works to our readers.

JOHANNES VERMEER Allegorie op de schilderkunst

VR Een glas wijn voor een sessie

"The Allegory of Painting"
(on the left) Johannes Vermeer,
(on the right) Vakhtang Rurua;

"Italy, XX century" (next page)
From personal archive

Sketches for the Film "Melodies of the Verijsky Quarter"
Paintings from Art Palace

In literary and art history, the term "Generation of the sixties" means the generation of writers, artists and directors that defined the fate of art in the 1960s. However, the concept includes something more important and meaningful–it's a significant historical period that marked the end of a cycle and brought new wind to Soviet literature and art.

It rapidly became obvious in the 60s that the openness and democratic reforms declared by the government were temporary and illusory – censorship and prohibition were still active. However, there was no escaping the inevitable – changes in consciousness and mentalities and the publication of dissident literature reflected the aspirations of artists to seek truth – innovation gained strength and it became impossible to go back. Of course, this does not mean that masters of conjuncture and compromise ceased to exist. There were numerous implementers of government orders who continued to act silently and enthusiastically! Fortunately, however, conformists don't define the development of art, therefore their names quickly faded and are forgotten forever.

The process that was forming new attitudes to art, new themes, characters and forms of expression, started already in the second half of the 1950s. Before that, Soviet art – especially films – was under severe ideological pressure.

The political events of the 50s, whose authors were guided by motives other than progress (which is why the so-called period of "warming" was so short and ephemeral) were extremely fruitful for literature and art. Illegitimacy was replaced by a search for truth, superficiality was replaced by an attempt to grasp what is profound, and adherence to norms and monotony were changed to the aspiration to freedom and diversity... These trends continued to develop in the 60s and 70s. During the same period, the iron curtain began to rise and there was no longer the severe deficit of information about art. Numerous styles and genres were defined in the film history of the 60s and 70s. We started accepting new forms and focusing on new problems. New characters appeared on the screen. Attempts to grasp our national character were more fruitful.

In this complicated and controversial process the generation of the 60s took the lead. The main film trends of this period were developed by authors whose vision was individualist and national, although linked to the global processes of the time. As everywhere else, Georgia could count on some such artists who entered into these new processes.

>> Irina Kuchukhidze

>> Archil Shubashvili

The galaxy of Georgian film directors of the 60s was comprised of Tenghiz Abuladze, Rezo Chkheidze, Otar Iosseliani, Eldar Shengalaya, Giorgi Shengelaya, Mikheil Kobakhidze, Lana Ghoghoberidze, Tamaz Meliava, Merab Kokochashvili, Rezo Esadze, Alexandre Rekhviashvili and other famous authors.

In 1963 Eldar Shengalaya and Tamaz Meliava made their debut film White Caravan, describing the hard life of shepherds and their dramatic choices. In 1964 Eldar Shengelaya made a stylistically interesting version of Davit Kldiashvili's Mikela. He then cooperated with scriptwriter Rezo Gabriadze to create marvelous comedies. Unusual Exhibition (1968) is an ironic tragic comedy about a sculptor who becomes an artisan. The sculptor's protests against the compromises he has to make to earn his living are expressed by the authors with humor, love and sympathy. In The Eccentrics (1973) R. Gabriadze and E. Shengelaya created a romantic world inhabited by characters who dream about love, freedom and flying away into the sky. The film is a fable, full of fairytales, of the grotesque, of buffoonery and comic elements. In 1977 Eldar Shengelaya made the film Samanishvili's Stepmother based on Davit Kldiashvili's story. The eccentricity of his previous work was substituted by tender, sad humor and a sense of the tragedy of life. In his later work the director revealed stylistic originality and new cinematographic elements. In Blue Mountains or an Unbelievable Story (1983) he retained his characteristic style: concealed humor and smooth satire. However, Shengelaya's later film Express Information (1993) focuses on significant social and moral problems as well as human conformity and resistance to social change and new ideals. The film is full of sarcastic irony, a grotesque exaggeration of characters and situations and mosaics of dramaturgically and stylistically different episodes.

In the 60s Mikheil Kobakhidze laid the foundation for a brilliant series of Georgian short films based on the classical "comic" tradition of silent films. Kobakhidze's original "little" masterpieces include Wedding (1964), Umbrella (1967) and Musicians (1969). He created a micro-world full of smiles, love, dreams, sadness, fantasy, plasticity and music.

The 60s and 70s also gave birth to famous Georgian comedies: Tamaz Meliava's Londres (1966), Kartlos Khotivari's Serenade (1968), Baadur Tsuladze's Feola (1970), Irakli Kvirikadze's Wine-Pot (1970) and Town Anara (1976), Nana Mchedlidze's The First Swallow (starring Dodo Abashidze, 1975) and Imeretian Sketches (1980), Guram Pataria's Record (1973) and many others.

Giorgi Shengelaya's works are characterized by thematic and genre diversity. In his first film Alaverdoba (1963), based on Guram Rcheulishvili's story he expressed the protest of a young person against perverted traditions and religious celebrations which turn into feasts. Another successful film by G. Shengelaya is Pirosmani (1969). The visual resolution and poetics of this film are based on the unique charm of Niko Pirosmani's paintings. Giorgi Shengelaya enriched Georgian cinema with the popular genres based on national materials. His Matsi Khvitia is made like a Western (1966), while The Melodies of Vera District is a classical musical film (1976) where music and choreography are naturally mixed with a melodramatic subject line, images of old Tbilisi and colorful characters. His adventure film Khareba and Gogia was extremely popular (1987). Giorgi Shengelaya also worked in a stylized artistic-theatrical manner. The artistic style of his film Young Composer's Trip (1985) is based on a 19th century style of painting. Expressive filming develops and enhances the author's ideas, and the dramatic story of a young person's trip through time and space are invaded with chaos and darkness. Genre and author's films are intertwined in Giorgi Shengelaya's contemporary work. The social drama Death of Orpheus (1996) and the eccentric comedy The Train Went On (2005) illustrate this.

Georgian cinema has gained world fame due to Otar Iosseliani's works. Each of his new films is in the center of attention of audiences and film critics. The poetics of the great master and his aspiration to synthesize prose and poetry have long been obvious, even in his early short films April (1962) and Cast Iron (1964). Iosseliani's famous films focusing on human relationships are Giorgobistve (1966), There Was a Singing Blackbird (1971) and Pastoral (1976). The author expresses his concern about the destruction of traditions, the flow of time and ephemeral existence, the complexity of finding the sense of life, and the substitution of spiritual values by consumer attitudes. His films are filled with nostalgia for the deep links that existed between human beings, people and nature, spirituality and daily life. The loss of these relations means the loss of harmony and integrity. Iosseliani's art is so cinematographic that it is hard to express in words. His films have unusual dramaturgical structures. There is no traditional scheme of narration or unexpected development of the subject line. The relations between characters are based on slight nuances and the director describes the characters and events on a precise but silent plane. Iosseliani's deep analytical thinking and nostalgia are always intermingled with refined, slightly melancholic humor which leads to a lyrical perception of the world and a special feel for poetic structure. In the 1980s Iosseliani continued his career in France, where he created the following films: Favorites of the Moon (1984), ...And There Was Light (1989), Hunting Butterflies (1992), Robbers, Chapter VII (1996), Goodbye, Land (1999), On Monday Morning (2001), Autumn Gardens (2006) and Chantrapas (2010).

A fable form was developed in Geor-

One of the masterpieces of Georgian cinema Great Green Valley (1967) is a drama of the main character's confrontation with the rhythm of modern life, and the destruction of the organic links between man and nature

gian films as an enriched artistic system of various structural elements, genres and details of everyday life. Deviating from this principle, director Alexandre Rekhviashvili created a "pure" form of fable, devoid of any elements of daily routine. His constructions are based on a clear intellectual foundation and strict expressive stylistics. Rekhviashvili's famous films are Nutsa, based on Mikheil Javakhishvili's drama (1971); an allegorical reconstruction of the tragic epochs, XIXth Century Georgian Chronicles (1978) and The Way Home (1981). His other films focusing on current reality are Step (1986) and Approach (1989). In these more recent films the aesthetically perfect arbitrary world is close to absurd. He achieves a philosophical understanding of human problems and universal themes only through cinematographic techniques. Ascetic narration, retarded rhythm, exquisite photographic images, grasping of profundity by scarce vivid details and other stylistic techniques all enrich Rekhviashvili's artistic world with the stylistic perfection that may be considered the director's aesthetic principle.

In 1962 Merab Kokochashvili created one of the best Georgian films for children, On Holiday. Soon he created another film, Philanderer based on Mikheil Javakhishvili's story. His short film Mikha (1965) is a humorous expression of the national character. Later the main theme of the director was the research of the confrontation between a person and the environment. One of the masterpieces of Georgian cinema Great Green Valley (1967) is a drama of the main character's confrontation with the rhythm of modern life, and the destruction of the organic links between man and nature. Thanks to the director, Dodo Abashidze's character Sosana is distinguished by her exceptional psychological depth and harmony. Almost no other Georgian film gives such a perfect psychological portrait of man. As most authors were engaged in the search of poetic forms and allegories, as well as the features of the national character, the research of a person's inner world and spiritual state was not common in Georgian films. In this regard, Great Green Valley is an exception. Three Hot Summer Days (1981) is dedicated to the issue of moral obligation towards the nation's cultural heritage. This theme was logically continued in television documentary films The Way (1981) and Georgian Phenomenon (1992). In these films the director tells about ancient Georgian history and spiritual treasures. Kokochashvili's latest works are a full length feature film Nutsa's School (2000); short video films Variation of the Theme of Othello (2004) and Usui (2005); a feature-documentary; and The House of Joy (2010) describes the legendary Georgian film Keto and Kote. Kokochashvili's latest documentary film The Cradle of Wine is devoted to the history of vine-growing and wine production in Georgia (2012).

One of the most famous female Georgian directors is Lana Ghoghoberidze, who is distinguished for the expression of her personal attitudes through her films. Her first feature Under One Sky (1961) consists of three stories, portraits of Georgian women at various periods in the twentieth century. Women's characters, their fate and social roles are discussed in a genuinely "female" film, Several Interviews on Private Issues (1978). In this film famous Georgian actress Sopiko Chiaureli plays a woman with complicated uncompromising character. The relationship of a woman to the dramatic world is the main theme of Lana Ghoghoberidze's other films: Morning Follows Night (1983), Whirlpool (1986) and Waltz on the Pechora (1992).

Georgian director Soso Chkhaidze devoted his films to Georgian cultural heritage and folk songs. These include Old Georgian Chorals (1971) and Shvidkatsa (1992). Chkhaidze's television film Tushetian Shepherd (1977) is distinguished for its artistic images created by documentary techniques. In this film the author refused to invent conflict, and showed the character's contact with nature and moral values by describing the shepherds' daily routine and real events.

Rezo Esadze is another outstanding Georgian director. His films Love at First Sight (1977), Nylon Christmas Tree (1985), and The Ceiling (2004) are made in original cinematographic style and illustrate a marvelous approach to "intellectual cinema".

Gela Kandelaki's Misery (1979) is one of the best examples of films based on classic literature, that of Davit Kldiashvili's famous writing.

Sergo Parajanov created his last films The Legend of Surami Fortress (1984) and Ashug-Karib (1988) in Georgia. His unique artistic style is based on Tbilisi folklore and Oriental cultural traditions.

This issue of Film Print contains other articles on outstanding filmmakers of the generation of the sixties – Lana Ghoghoberidze, Eldar Shengelaya and Rezo Esadze. Esadze is an artist of diverse talents, so we hope the readers will enjoy his paintings and poetry as well. ●

In Search of Film Metaphors
Eldar Shengelaya

>> Ketevan Trapaidze

The "Generation of the 60s" is a term used for the generation of Georgian film directors who defined the poetic-metaphorical style of the 1960s and 70s. They gave birth to many innovations, controversial motifs and complex artistic tendencies. However, the metaphor of this period was different. As soon as we mention the word "poetic" we remember Eldar Shengelaya's films. This is natural – his characters are invented, yet realistic, romantic and taken from a familiar reality. They create a harmonious poetic world – the passage of time does not affect the charm of The Eccentrics, Unusual Exhibition and Blue Mountains.

In search of realism and poetic metaphor, Eldar Shengelaya created a unique artistic world inhabited by characters with behavior and features that arouse a sense of coincidence of the epoch and a wish to return to that world again and again. Shengelaya avoids detailed discussion of his films and underlines the importance of the processes in the 60s for the development of Georgian cinema. He recalls the influence of neo-realistic films on his awareness. He also analyzes the problems and processes in current Georgian filmmaking. His personal and general interests are still related to cinema, so the Director recalls the epoch which defined much of Georgia's cinema art...

You and other directors of your generation created a very important epoch in the history of Georgian cinema. You participated in all the important events, including the establishment of the Georgian National Film Center. You were one of the initiators of this project, although you faced a lot of challenges. With time, the Film Center has had significant results. What do you think of its current role and projects?

E.S: It is true that I actively participated in the establishment of the National Film Center. Initially there were arguments and problems. I think currently the Center works successfully, although more financing is needed. Georgia is a small country and in such countries the authorities usually allocate significant financing to film production. Our government should take this issue into account and attract investments for film production. In the Soviet epoch we had an opportunity to obtain State financing for films. However, at that time censorship was the main problem. Now there is no censorship, and the key problem is financing.

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Due to the style created by you and other representatives of the generation of the 60s, Georgian cinema was called a poetic phenomenon. What led to the poetic diversity of the films made in the 60s and 70s? And how did you manage to develop the strictly individual features of your creative works?
E.S.: I avoid talking about my films, as I think films should be assessed by film critics and the audience. One cannot praise his child. If we generalize the reasons for the success of the films of the 60s, we should mention many reasons. This generation came to the film industry after the death of Stalin and dismissal of Khrushchev, so in this so-called period of "stagnation", censorship was less strict. However, many films were damaged and only restored much later, like Merab Kokochashvili's Great Green Valley. Several episodes were cut from the finished film, and a long time passed until the film was restored.

Probably there was a mechanism that regulated the relationship with censorship. What was it? Was it hard to bring a film to the audience?
E.S.: Many things depended on pure coincidence. For instance, Unusual Exhibition was released at the time of the 100th anniversary of Lenin's birth. Nobody had time to pay attention to it. All over the Soviet Union films about Lenin were shown, and "Mosfilm" made films on the subject too. Unusual Exhibition was overshadowed by the events happening, and this saved the film, because at that time films were evaluated by the Editorial Board and the Head of

Photos: Khatuna Khutsishvili; personal archive

the Film Committee of the Soviet Union (in fact, it was the Minister of Cinema who watched the films alone). When we showed him Unusual Exhibition, the film had not yet been dubbed into Russian, and the text was read aloud by Rezo Gabriadze. The Minister was writing something down and didn't smile even once. When it film was over, he said it was no good and that he had some comments for us to take into account. He told us to come back the next day.

Rezo was worried, thinking he had let me down. I reassured him that it was not his fault and told him such situations were usual. So we went the next day, but the Minister was not there. We waited for an hour, when he rushed into his office and feverishly started searching for his notes. At the same time he was answering the phone, saying, "Yes, of course!"

It turned out that he was just a dispatcher of films and not the Minister! The films were sent to the villas of Government members. I noticed a table with food nearby and thought they were going to invite us, but it turned out that the table had been prepared for the French attaché. The "Minister" wanted us to cut the episode where Aguli Eristavi "plays war" on a background of Hitler's monologue. He considered it a parody of World War II.

I promised I would cut it, though it was a lie. I came to Tbilisi and left the film as it was, then went back Moscow, cut the episode from the positive copy, but retained it in the negative. In addition to this, Lenin's anniversary overshadowed the film and thus saved it.

FP: The generation of the 60s defined certain trends in Georgian filmmaking. The second half of the 20s was also an especially interesting period for Georgian cinema and there is a lot of research dedicated to this period. However, this heritage needs a different analysis. Certain inexact comments and disguised truths always distort history. Should the early steps made by Georgian cinema be reevaluated?

E.S.: Certainly! Recently the "Peak" Russian language TV channel in Georgia broadcast Nikoloz Shengelaya's Eliso, which is a silent film. I was surprised, because silent films are not popular these days. We have to study that period again and again. Our generation followed the experience of the 20s in editing (the art of editing was extremely well-developed at the time of silent films). We were obliged to study editing thoroughly. Silent films had unique characteristics that should be studied with special attention. By the way, Chaplin was against sound in films. Silent films are our history, and it is always very important to study history, especially today.

Your biography is very interesting. Your relation to cinema is largely due to your family. However, there might have been some stimulus too – some film, director or trend that influenced your decision to become a film director?

E.S.: You'll be surprised to learn that it was just the contrary. I had never thought about filmmaking, and when I finished school I entered the Department of Hydraulic Engineering and studied there for half a year. I was young and wanted to have my own opinion about things. Mother was glad I had entered that career. However I soon withdrew my documents from the Technical University and told mother I wanted to quit. She quoted Stalin's words: "Better little, but good".

However, this is not the case with films. If you work little, you will never make good films – in the Georgian Film Studio, directors worked in pairs for this very reason. I was greatly influenced by neorealism – films by Rossellini, Vittorio de Sica and others. By the way, when Rezo Chkheidze and Tenghiz Abuladze created Magdana's Lurja they were blamed for the influence of neorealism. Neorealism itself was a phenomenon of universal significance, and its influence on the films of other countries was positive. I also experienced this influence.

The influence of neorealism was decisive for the fate of Georgian cinema in that period. Contemporary students are also greatly interested in this trend...

E.S.: This is natural. Currently filmmaking is affected by commercialism. However, it is elite cinema that defines the essence of filmmaking. At least I think so!

Features of every epoch are reflected in films. I have seen your debut film-tale made in cooperation with Alexey Sakharov –The Legend of the Frozen Heart. I was impressed by its sincerity and naïve, poetic peacefulness...

E.S.: Alexey Sakharov – "Liosha" as we called him – was my close friend. He presented me his photo signed "To My Friend and Brother"... We shared a room on campus and made films together. We made Gamblers based on Gogol's literary work. Unfortunately these films have not survived. The tape contained silver, and they washed it to obtain the precious metal. Many films were ruined this way. Liosha and I made The Legend of the Frozen Heart, Winter Tale, and then we parted, because I wanted to work at the studio where my parents used to work. Yet we remained great friends until his death. I regret that now they often criticize VGIK (the USSR State Institute of Cinematography). When I was a student, VGIK was small but very important. Now it has become much larger. In my student years, instead of a studio we had a small pavilion where we made films.

Your generation certainly had some information about Western cinema; however Western films were rare on Soviet screens. Many of them were even strictly prohibited. How did you obtain information about Western cinema and its classic films?

E.S.: At that time Western films were shown to VGIK students, but nobody else was allowed to watch them. Of course, the films were criticized just

In my opinion, the basis for any film is dramaturgy. No film will be remarkable unless it is based on good script.

to follow the rules of censorship, but we had our opinions. And after the end of World War II, many Western films were brought to the USSR as trophies. They were assessed according to Soviet ideology, but we were not influenced by these comments and drew our own conclusions. Thus we managed to see valuable works of cinematographic art. Besides, cinema tickets were very cheap: 20 kopecks for children and a little more for adults. Today it costs 15 GEL to go to Rustaveli Cinema, which is one more barrier.

There will always be a problem of choice until more movie-theaters are built in Georgia. Currently there are only four movie-theaters in Tbilisi. This restricts choice. I don't mean there should be many huge theaters. But at least there should be minor halls with about 100 seats. Either the State or private business should invest in such projects. This support would directly encourage the development of the film industry in Georgia. There are other mechanisms to support filmmaking. For example in many Western countries the law prohibits TV broadcasting of new films until their theatre release is over. I think our country should follow this example.

If I am not mistaken, this mechanism has been launched in Georgia now, too. You used to mentor a group of film directors at the University of Theater and Cinema. What is your opinion about contemporary Georgian cinema, and how do you view its future? In what direction should Georgian films develop?

E.S.: My brother Giorgi Shengalaya and I were against establishing a film school in Georgia, since we thought it would fail to bring any results, as at that time VGIK did a lot for the development of Georgian cinema. Then things changed... I was asked to mentor one group of talented young people: Otar Litanishvili, Dito Tsintsadze, and Tato Kotetishvili, the author of a very important, although forgotten film Anaemia... Many of them are good directors. My method of teaching was giving them my scripts and inviting them to the filming sets. In Blue Mountains my students even performed minor roles. I think such practices are useful. We had friendly relationships and worked fruitfully, but I've had no more students since then.

I think above all education should be considered at the initial stages. No one can become a good director without a proper education. Probably the most suitable form of education are the higher courses of direction and script-writing. Gia Danelia graduated from such courses. He was an architect, but he finished the courses and as a result we have a great director. Rezo Gabriadze also studied script-writing at these courses. The script of Unusual Exhibition was his diploma work. In my opinion, several contemporary directors have their unique style, which signals the start of new processes in Georgian filmmaking. In this regard, I can name Zaza Urushadze, Levan Koguashvili and Giorgi Ovashvili.

At a certain stage, when history reevaluates events, film direction reveals new and remarkable attitudes towards reality. It is amazing that young people do not consider The Eccentrics, Blue Mountains and Unusual Exhibition as alien or as a forgotten reality. This means that your creations have not been affected by time. For instance, young filmmakers perceive Blue Mountains as an eternal and unchangeable model of social life. What defined the artistic unity of the form and content in the case of your creations? How did you retain the integrity of this artistic tissue and generalized artistic values?

E.S.: In my opinion, the basis for any film is dramaturgy. No film will be remarkable unless it is based on good script.

Did you frequently make changes in the original script?

E.S.: Of course! Script development entails changes. But this does not refer only to dramaturgy. Changes are made also in the process of shooting and editing.

Since your last film, Express Information, you have taken a long break, although you have been actively involved in social life. Is there any appealing project planned for the nearest future?

E.S.: Let's see what happens in the nearest future. I do have some ideas. Time will show whether I will start shooting again... ●

Photo from personal archive

Lana Ghoghoberidze

>> Nutsa Shubashvili

Film director, writer, translator, politician, public figure – Lana Ghoghoberidze's name is linked to almost all the most significant Georgian cultural and political events of the past decades. She created films during the Soviet period, then promoted Georgia abroad and wrote about the hardships and evils of the country. This important representative of the Golden Age of Georgian cinema discusses her diverse and creative career. She draws parallels between past and present, remembering the tragic events of the 1980s.

Let's start with your films and their main themes, as they helped you define the fate and social role of women. Are these films autobiographic to a certain extent? Your characters frequently sacrifice their dreams and ambitions to the interests of society. Was it the same in your case?

LG: Some of the films reflect various periods of my life and they express my feelings. A mother's exile, an abandoned child, a mother's return – these characters, events and feelings are really autobiographical. Every author reflects their life and feelings in their work. All works of art express the author's attitude and viewpoint. This is the same in my case-my characters reflect my vision of the world.

Sopiko Chiaureli in Several Interviews on Personal Themes and Darejan Kharshiladze in Morning Follows Night create the images of strong, independent women. If you made a film now, what portrait of a woman would you draw? Have women changed in the 21st century, and, if yes, in what way?

LG: Sopiko Chiureli's character is a journalist, so she tries to identify herself with the respondents. Her attitude towards women is revealed through the interviews she takes from women of various ages and social backgrounds. In my youth I was greatly impressed by Walt Whitman and his attitude towards life and people. He wrote, "I am the hounded slave, I am the streetwalker." Sopiko's attitude is the same: she is overcome with the feelings and emotions she comes across in her profession. Darejan Kharshiladze's character is a rebel woman who makes decisions independently. Both women make choices and try to overcome fate. In general, I appreciate people who try to manage their destiny. I think I have lived this way. This is how I imagine a contemporary woman.

Recently the public became acquainted with you as a translator of French poetry. How did you begin translating famous poets?

LG: I have always loved poetry and translated a first poem at the age of 15. It was Edgar Alan Poe's "Annabel Lee". I was interested in the themes of this poem – -childhood love, love intertwined with death. I am still interested in these issues. In my youth I adored Whitman and Tagore. I have also translated the Russian poets Akhmatova, Tsvetaeva and Pasternak. Currently I am translating Bela Akhmadulina. My collection of French poetry includes my favorite French classical poets – Baudelaire, Eluard, Apollinaire. It is not a coincidence that in the same

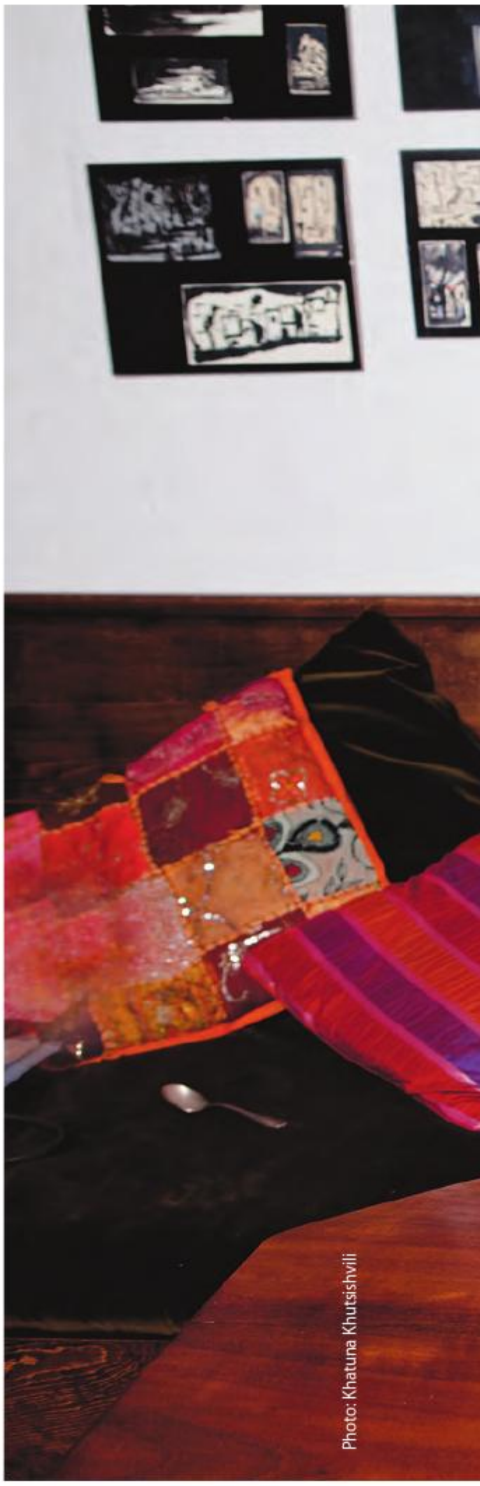


Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

collection I have included poems by the Arab poet, Adonis, as I think his works are very close to the Georgian character. They unite Eastern and Western culture. He's a rebel who fights against Islamic fundamentalism through his poetry. I like his outlook; according to him, despite a tragic fate and life in a devastated world, man always aspires towards light. Currently Adonis lives in Paris, and I want to send him this collection of poetry with his verses included.

You, as film director and writer, always focus on acute problems of Georgian society, and you touch on pressing themes in your creative work. For instance, in the musical film The Ado in Salkhineti you criticized Georgians' excessive love for eating and drinking, whereas in the book What I Recall and How I Recall you wrote about hatred and aggression. How do you evaluate Georgians nowadays?

LG: I am happy that a sense of solidarity is gradually developing in present-day Georgia. Today Georgians protest about persons who are indifferent to other people's misery. No one should stay calm at seeing the hardships of others. In the 21st century an individual should not be locked in his shell and should notice what's going on around them. The ability to see the suffering of others and sympathize with people in misery should be a characteristic feature of every nation. At first glance, Georgians seem to prefer eating and drinking to appreciating beauty and art. However, Georgians like to enjoy life, and they remain joyful even in difficult situations. Probably this feature has saved Georgians in hard times. The gift of joy and love is a sign of spirituality, and I am happy that Georgians are bestowed with this gift.

Let's speak about your public activities. In 1999-2006 you represented Georgia in the European Council. At what stage in your life did you feel you were fulfilling your obligations? What does it mean to represent your country outside its borders?

LG: Of course my public activities and their results should be assessed by others. I always remember the time spent with the European Council with great pleasure. It was a time of intense work. The aim of our Embassy was to promote the image of Georgia in Europe. When I first went to the European Council they only knew that a small country – Georgia – existed on the map. I worked to explain our culture, our cultural identity, our art, national character, and our land. I communicated our tragic fate, linked with joy and a love of life. I think I succeeded in this. We also sought to protect the interests of the country, as this was a time of confrontation between Georgia and Russia. So it was necessary to explain our political position to the European Council. Europe had always supported us in our struggle against Russian imperialism. I made numerous public speeches when Russian passports were distributed in Abkhazia. Everyone supported me and condemned Russia. I was well aware of the fact that I was representing a

small country affected by an aggressive neighbor. I wanted to prove that the 21st century is no longer an age of empires and that the aim of all international organizations is to protect smaller countries from the aggression of big ones. This process was very interesting and I felt I was creating a living image of Georgia.

And how does it feel to create works of art that withstand the influence of time?
LG: This relates to the creative side, for example while working on a film, a book or a picture, the author does not serve anyone, but simply expresses their inner being. What your creative work tells your countrymen is a different matter. Since I ceased making films, I have started painting, translating and writing. All fields in which I create something are extremely important for me. Each field helps me express my attitudes and feelings.

Your films received awards at festivals in Venice, San Remo, Cannes and Tokyo. Probably it is hard to stop filmmaking after such success – Do you think you quit filmmaking at the right time?
LG: I didn't want to stop making films, but it was simply impossible to go on shooting, because at that time I thought it was more important to be involved in public activities. My interest in public activities became especially acute after the 9th of April (1989). At that time Georgia aspired to become part of Europe, and this incident defined my life. I myself participated in that public protest and witnessed the tragic events. I still remember that day with horror. I think I did my best to persuade the world that people did not die because of a stampede during the protest, but that it was an order of the authorities – Russian aggression implemented by the Soviet military. It was very important to explain our tragedy to the international community. At that time I was a jury member at a film festival in Germany, and I organized a press-conference to show them the documentary materials about the events of the 9th of April. The audience was in tears. I think it was a patriotic act and I carried out an obligation to our country.

Your film career developed mainly during the Soviet period, which is still considered the Golden Age of Georgian cinema. Did you manage to achieve creative freedom during that period?
LG: I have often thought of this paradox. Even within a context of ideological pressure, Georgian films still developed as a world-famous phenomenon. Censorship was severe indeed – two of my films were banned when I had already planned the shootings and had done all the preparatory work. It was a hard time. One of these films was based on Archil Sulakauri's story Waves Move to the Shore. Suddenly a commission arrived from Moscow and concluded that the film was based on pacifist ideas and couldn't be made. The other film was based on Tamaz Chiladze's Afternoon, about a person who had suffered the tragedy of the 1937 repressions. This project was considered anti-Soviet. Today I see that, despite strict censorship, artists managed to express their feelings and attitudes. We had a common enemy that we defeated by means of cinematographic language. Frequently we limited dialogue and made the images more expressive. This is how a film language was developed in that complicated socio-political context. The flourishing of cinema and culture in the Soviet period was also due to State financing. If a film passed the censorship, it obtained complete financing! This was the positive side of the Soviet system for the film industry. Fortunately, however, the revival of Soviet ideology is impossible.

Please tell us about your mother – the first female Georgian director Nutsa Ghoghoberidze.
LG: I can't explain my happiness at watching my mother's film for the first time. I am glad Georgian audiences have had an opportunity to see it. The film is called Buba and it was created in 1930. Buba is the name of a mountain in Racha, and the documentary film is about Racha. Unfortunately, the film remained unknown to Georgian audiences for a long time. It was prohibited and forgotten, because my mother spent ten years in exile. Only recently were we able to appreciate my mother's work, and the film has become part of Georgian cultural heritage.

Sasha Rekhviashvili described the film as "…about eternity…. and the film and its author have returned to us and become part of eternity too." So far only this film has been discovered but I know there is another one, a feature film. I hope it will be shown some day. Apart from films, my mother created stories that I have published. They describe the hard life of exile. Mother was too modest to mention her films. She was exiled at the age of 34, and that was the end of her creative career. When she returned, she had to struggle for existence, and fortunately her talents were diverse. I take after her, of course.

We began by talking about films, and let's conclude our discussion with films. Probably you regret not having implemented something important – and there is something you wanted to tell society.
LG: I find it hard to speak about it, as above all, I am a film director and my dream is to shoot films again. If I ever have a chance, I will express my current feelings through another film. With time, one understands more and one's attitude to life changes. The approach of death is a tragedy for many people, but I feel the opposite. When you know death is close, you appreciate every moment of life. Every single minute you want to say, "Stop! This second is beautiful!" The sense of the beauty of life gets stronger with age, and I would like to make a film about this acute feeling – the love of life. ●

Director, Painter, Poet

>> Archil Shubashvili

Photo: Khatu[illegible]utsishvili

Rezo Esadze, famous Georgian film director, actor, painter and poet, was born on February 18, 1934 in the village of Shemokmedi in the district of Ozurgeti (Guria region). In 1956 he graduated from the Department of Physics of Tbilisi State University and in 1965 he graduated from the Department of Film Direction of the USSR Institute of Cinema in Moscow, Mikheil Romm's studio. In 1960-62 he created a pre-diploma film entitled Once at what was called the "Georgian Film Studio". For ideological reasons, this film remained on the shelf. In 1963–75 he worked as director at the "Lenfilm Studio" (Leningrad) where he made Fro, Four Pages of a Young Woman's Life, and Stopwatch.

In 1972 at the Tbilisi television film studio he created a comedy called Flicks, and since 1975 has worked at the "Georgian Film Studio" in Tbilisi. Here he finished the film Love at First Sight that he had started in Leningrad.

He has been Deputy Director of the Georgian Film Studio since 1974 and in 1978 he founded the youth creations department ("union") called Debut. In 1989 he founded a studio of experimental and short films called Kinostudia+1 based on the Debut initiative. Films made by these studios have taken part in many local and international festivals where they have been well received and awarded. During his time at "Georgian Film Studio" Esadze directed The Mill in the Suburb (1981; scriptwriters: Rezo Inanishvili and Rezo Esadze), Nylon Christmas Tree (1984; scriptwriters: Amiran Dolidze and Rezo Esadze), and The Ceiling, or Materials for an Unfinished Film (1991-2003; scriptwriters: Rezo Kveselava and Rezo Esadze), based on "flow of consciousness". Esadze himself plays the main role.

As an actor, Esadze played in Nine Days of One Year (director Mikheil Romm, 1962), Sparrows' Flight (director Temur Babluani, 1980), Repentance (director Tenghiz Abuladze, 1984), Leonardo (director D. Natsvlishvili, 1992) and others. In 1976 he was the main character in Irakli Kvirikadze's film The Town of Anara and received the award for Best Actor at the Gobrovo International Film Festival in Bulgaria.

Exhibitions of his paintings have been organized in Tbilisi, Moscow, Munich, Geneva and Tel-Aviv. He has published collections of his poems with his own illustrations: Poems and Paintings (2001) and The Monologue of Pegasus (2003). Since 1980 he has taught at the Shota Rustaveli University of Theater and Cinema and at Ivane Javakhhishvili Tbilisi State University.

Rezo Esadze is a member of the Georgian Union of Cinematographers and the Georgian Union of Painters. In 1980 he received the title of Honored Art Worker of Georgia and in 1995 he was awarded the Order of Dignity. In 2004 he received the Rustaveli Award for his creative work.

Rezo Esadze's Paintings

>> Davit Andriadze

Rezo Esadze's paintings are visual poetry; they are images of free verse by a director who can make "much ado about nothing" at each step and, what's most important, make us love all the commotion "at first sight"... Paintings in cinema are "in search of lost time" and their charm is unleashed energy, unceasing rhythmic form and asymmetry. These seemingly endless paintings do not reflect events, but simply imprint the "states of being" and trace escape routes from those states.

For Esadze, "line" is everything. Line is imprinted on a simple character and contrasts with a blank sheet of paper... Black India ink is blotted in certain places, and this underlines the power of a line, its capacity to turn into volume. The art of painting is a strange phenomenon. It is difficult to describe the artistic elements of a painting in traditional terms; it is hard to detect "chiaroscuro", "mass" or "tangible matter". The essence of Esadze's graphics can be defined by one word: Metamorphosis. He aspires to interpret process rather than finish with an end product. Gradually the rules of open absurdity join the game, and "states" turn into "situations".

Little by little a painting as light as Nylon Christmas Tree becomes "material" and turns into a concrete action – although "concrete" does not exclude contrasting associations that sometimes perform a narrative function. Esadze's paintings are a search for the visible form of the invisible – hidden sacred nothingness, emptiness and eternity.

These paintings resemble letters sent to Eternity, addressed to "general delivery". Yes, one falls in love with these paintings at first sight, and they strongly resemble their author...

A Gift from Rezo Esadze

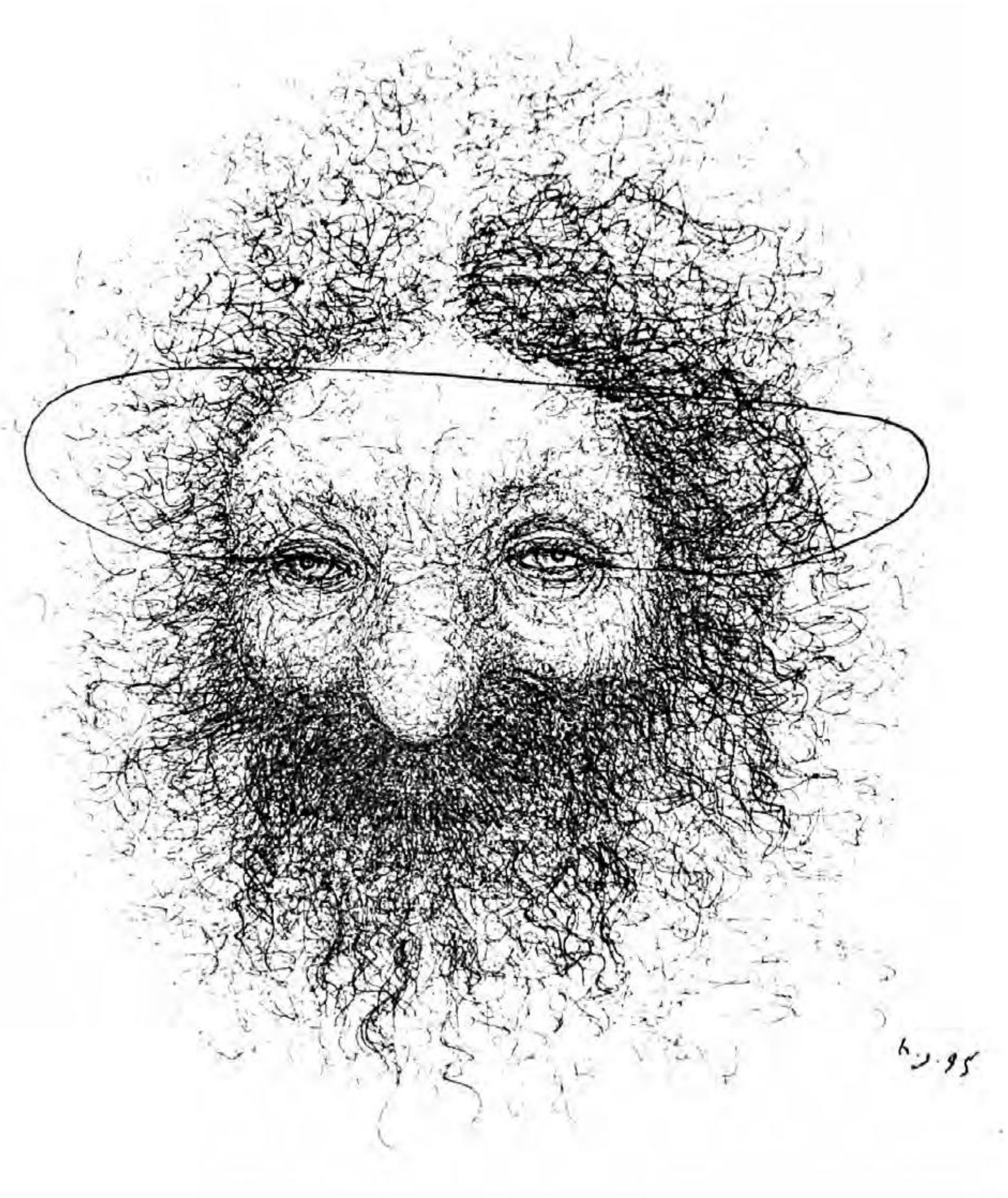
>> Kartuli Mtserloba

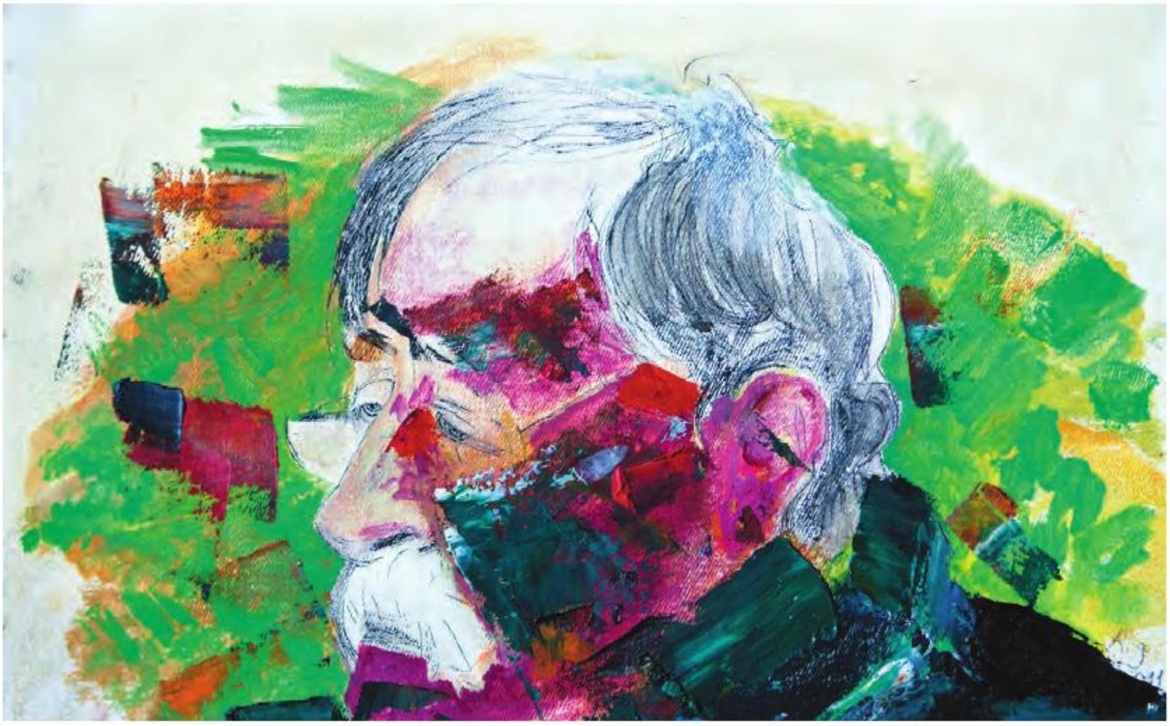
Spending a few minutes with Rezo Esadze is like remembering a distant yet familiar melody. Even the thoughts of this strange man resemble a chant filled with subconscious gratitude to everything created by God. Rezo Esadze's naive nature leads to an illusion that he plays with the colorful world like a child...

However, those who are well aware of the phenomenon of Rezo Esadze agree that he can profoundly and powerfully diagnose any complicated problem, process or tendency and make an unbiased analysis like an exacting expert.

Recently cinephiles received the gift of an amazing book. It is a fantastic manual about film direction where the great maestro discusses filmmaking and leads the reader into a space which is hard to leave voluntarily.

Rezo Esadze On Filmmaking is a book based on the great director's professional, intellectual and daily experience. It is not only to be read, but listened to like marvelous music. It is a book to be seen and suffered like a film.





The Heart Falls Asleep in Pain: Rezo Esadze

>> Kartuli Mtserloba

Is there anything in this world that Rezo Esadze as a person and an artist can ignore? We are sure there's not. His mind constantly invents warm, endearing paradoxes so that the sense of reality is never affected. The abundance of his emotions is amazing, his heart always burning and stormy.

Today he resembles the Sun setting beyond a purple horizon. He is beloved and hopeful, although his heart "falls asleep in pain for the coming day". His films are strange paintings—both sad and cheerful and his poems filled with aesthetics like jewels, resembling oriental handiwork.

"Old age creeps over hands
Like moss onto stones"

The poetic world of Esadze that became available five or six years ago has become an indisputable part of Georgian poetry. This poetic world, created by the famous Georgian film director, actor and painter, is not just an appendix to his cinematographic masterpieces but is unique, profound and expressive in its own right. His poems would have found their rightful place in the Georgian national culture even if they had not been backed by the great master's film career.

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Otar Iosseliani
Films by the Survivor

The following article about Otar Iosseliani was published in the German magazine Schnitt, □ 66, 02.2012 , Authors: Erica and Ulrich Gregor

Any person with all five senses will join a Sunday voyage to the Moskva-Volga canal of the Moscow Film Festival only once in a lifetime. Therefore, in 1977 we refused to join this stupid excursion which was chiefly aimed at drinking vodka. That morning they called us and secretly asked if we would like to see a new Soviet film that was not allowed at the Festival and had not been screened publicly. Of course we agreed and, with several other people, were taken to a suburb of Moscow in a small bus. There, an old lady unlocked the door of the hall of the Culture Palace. Prior to the showing a tall thin man introduced himself, saying he was the director of the film. He also said the film was in Georgian with no subtitles, but it was all right, as everything was clear even without the subtitles and that in general, subtitles affect films since they distract the attention of the spectator. He said that a film that needs subtitles is a bad film.

We entered and sat down, afraid. Then the film started – it was Pastoral (1975). We were immediately charmed by the film, the people and the country. After this showing we wanted to know more about the country and to see it with our own eyes. At the beginning of March this year Otar Iosseliani came to Berlin again to open his retrospective at the "Arsenal". We were happy to watch his films, although despite some comic and satirical scenes, the films are very sad and full of melancholy.

However, there is love of life and hope in the films too. Peter Greenaway once said that a director makes one and the same film all the time and that his theme is the same in all films. Otar Iosseliani's theme is protest. Beginning from Giorgobistve (1966) he repeats the same thing: don't compromise, don't let others impose on you, don't concede what is your own. To achieve this, one can be assisted by music and friends. Iosseliani's theme remains unchanged from Giorgobistve to Chantrapas (2010). However, the tonality becomes darker and one can see that these are the films of a survivor.

Iosseliani stood thrice on the stage of the Arsenal and spoke to the audience; now he prefers to speak in French. Born in 1934, age has not changed him and he has retained the sly humor, occasionally intermingled with bitterness, which is his peculiar feature. His latest films Autumn Gardens (2006) and Chantrapas have not yet been released in Germany, but it appears that Iosseliani has a permanent group of fans here – some spectators swore they had seen Iosseliani's Georgian films back in the German Democratic Republic where they had a status of cult films.

We showed Iosseliani's films at the Berlinale forum. The most successful were Pastoral (1982 forum), Favorites of the Moon (1985 forum,) and A Small Monastery in Toscana (1989 forum). Iosseliani is good at telling stories and jokes. But don't ask him about Battleship Potemkin (this will be followed by a philippic of negation). Instead, ask him about his relations with Soviet censors and the tricks he played on them ("Being a censor is the saddest fate"). He has much to say about music and his love of animals ("because they are more beautiful than people"...) which is often obvious in his films

Iosseliani's films are unique, perfect creations, multi-level, full of the surrealistic unexpected and of brilliant ideas. They are the mirror of our epoch and other epochs both in the West and in the East. His creative works are treasures of humor and thought, struggles against political and social guardianship, hymns to independent life and the rejection of glamour and commercialism in cinema. ●

Stills from the Films
"Falling Leaves",
"Once Upon a Time
There Was a Singing
Blackbird", "Pastorale"

"Georgian Cinema is a Unique Phenomenon" Federico Fellini

In an interview for Daugava the monthly magazine of the Latvian Union of Writers, Federico Fellini mentioned Georgian cinema.

Daugava: Senior Federico, have you seen Tenghiz Abuladze's film Repentance? In our country this film caused the explosion of a moral bomb...
FF: I have seen it. Surprisingly enough, this film turned out to be very close to me, although the historical experience of my country is totally different. I have suffered dictatorship and fascism, and Abuladze reflected ordinary fascism in this film. Corrosion caused by fascism, the way it functioned in what was a seemingly peaceful everyday life – this is what Abuladze has generalized and expressed as a moral-aesthetic shock. Georgia's marvelous director Rezo Esadze says, "We should fight evil with kindness and blind it with light"... I agree. However, I don't have pure colors, I mix them on my palette for a long time – I constantly think that the color of life is even more mixed...

Daugava: Do you know Georgian films well?
FF: Yes, I know them well and I love them! Recently I saw Esadze's Nylon Christmas Tree. I think it is a real masterpiece.... I've seen the fascinating films of Sergo Parajanov. Nikita Mikhalkov travels a lot and now he is shooting a film in Italy and is trying to promote Georgian cinema, especially the talented directors who are not yet known to the world, like Esadze... Georgian cinema is a unique phenomenon – colorful, philosophically bright, very wise and yet childish... When I watch Georgian films, my eyes fill with tears... And this is not easy to achieve. ●

In 1983 a famous Italian film critic, Giovanni Graziani, recorded a vast interview with Federico Fellini. In the interview Fellini talked about his likes and dislikes. The great maestro said:
"**I don't like:** Elite parties, interviews, round tables, giving autographs, snails, queuing, mountains, boats, radio, music in restaurants, music as such when I am forced to listen to it, anecdotes, football fans, ballet, Christmas trees, any kind of Roquefort, awards ceremonies, oysters, talks about Brecht and Brecht in general, official dinners, toasts, speeches, invitations, questions about my opinion, Humphrey Bogart, quizzes, Magritte, painting exhibitions, theatrical premieres, printed texts, tea, chamomile decoction, caviar, any kind of premieres, theater "de la Madalena", quotations, "real men", youth films, theatricality, temperament, being asked questions, Pirandello, pancakes, beautiful landscapes, collecting money for charity, political films, psychological films, historical films, windows without shutters, commitment and non-commitment, ketchup.
I like: Railway stations, Matisse, airports, risotto, oak trees, Rossini, roses, Marx Brothers , tigers, waiting at a rendezvous hoping that the awaited person won't come (even if she is very beautiful), Toto, unknown places, Piero della Francesca, all the beauties of a woman, Homer, Joan Blondell, September, ice-cream with nuts, sweet cherries, the big ass of a woman on a bike, train and food-baskets, Ariosto, cockers and dogs in general, the scent of damp soil, the smell of hay, laurel leaves, Cyprus trees, winter sea, silent people, James Bond, abandoned buildings, empty restaurants, miserable faces, empty churches, Ostia, bell chimes, being alone in Urbino on Sunday evening, basilicas, Bologna, Venice and the entire Italy, Chandler, concierge women, Simenon, Dickens, Kafka, Jack London, roast chestnuts, metro, buses, large high beds, Vienna (although I have never been there), waking up, falling asleep, writing paper, 'Faber №2' pencils, entertainment in movie-theaters prior to the film, bitter chocolate, mysteries, night, shadows, Turner, Leda Gloria (but I also liked Greta Gonda), and ballerinas." ●

Federico Fellini,
Marcello Mastroianni,
Giulietta Masina

Stills from the Films "The Other Bank" , "Mediator"

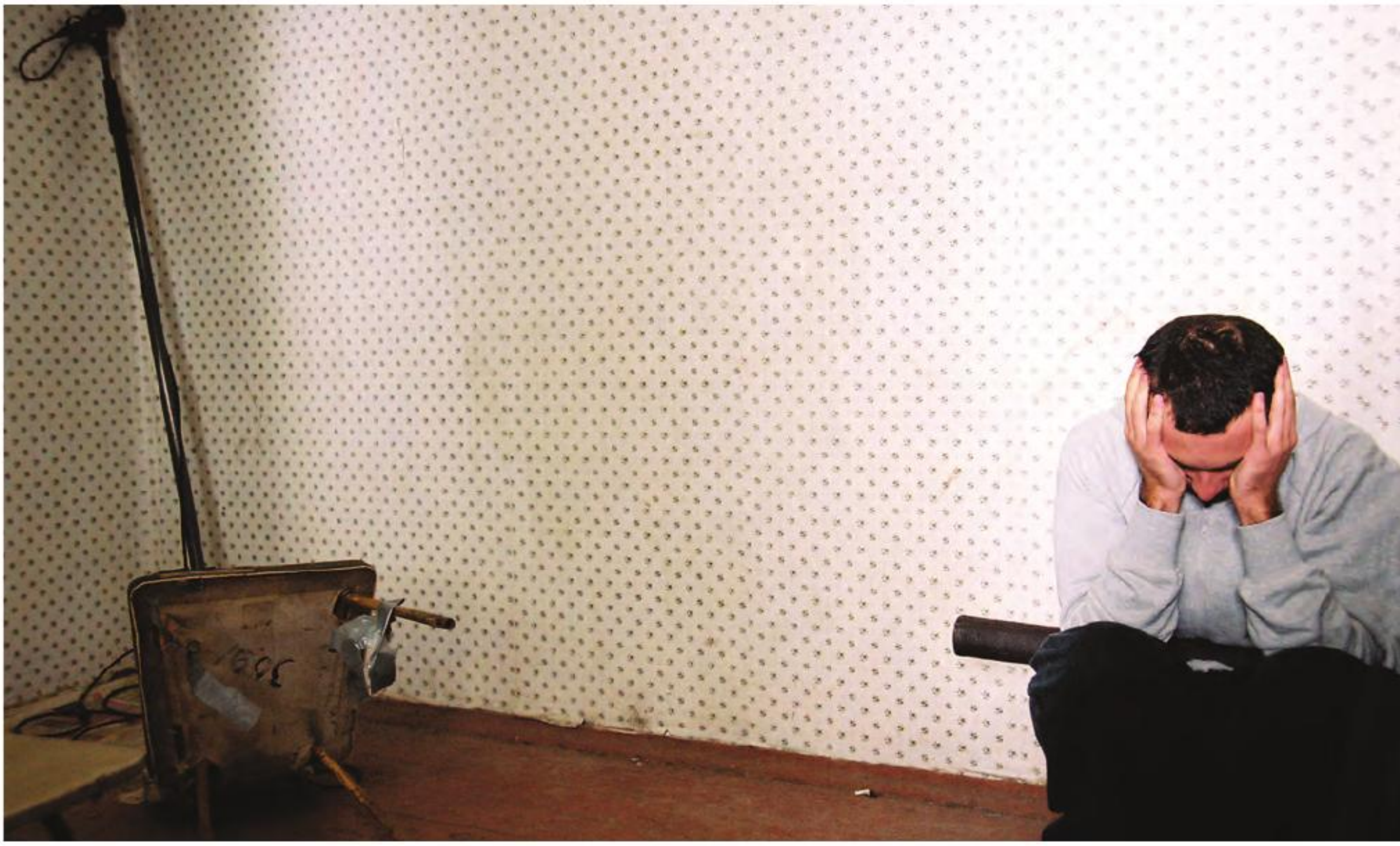
The Critics' Opinion

>> Ketevan Trapaidze, Archil Shubashvili

What can be considered a cinematographic work and what cannot? What dilemma does film dramaturgy face and what is the artistic image of the so-called entertainment film? What is current Georgian reality with regard to filmmaking? – These issues were brought to the forefront at the meeting of film critics at the Cinema House in Tbilisi. We asked them to name the seven best of the 58 Georgian films created in the past decade, based on the usual criteria for evaluating films.

It is always hard to draw a general picture where there is no strict categorical boundary between a cinematographic product and a structurally different one. Besides, Georgia's social and political crises since the 1990s still impact the industry here. Current Georgian films are usually evaluated on several criteria, and though opinions differ, there are benchmarks that help identify the stage of development of current Georgian cinema.

Paata Iakashvili: To my mind, the list of seven films is too long, but despite the quantity, the artistic quality of these films doesn't correspond to professional standards. Most of these films are proof of the crisis in current Georgian cinema. Out of the films mentioned, I could single out only five. Above all, I would mention Otar Iosseliani's Chantrapas. On my list the second place would be awarded to Russian Triangle, third to Vano Burduli's Conflict Zone, distinguished by its search for creativity, the fourth is Dito Tsintsadze's Mediator and the fifth is Zaza Urushadze's Three Houses. Georgian cinema seems to have lost its shine. Right now Georgian films are characterized by their non-professionalism, absence of dramaturgy and poor editing. Recently a special focus has been made on erotic scenes. However, in these films even the naked body fails to look erotic, because the events and objects reflected in the film are devoid of function. The existing state of affairs should be well-assessed and, with State support, society should become familiar with critical articles and opinions on Georgian films.



Manana Lekborashvili: In my opinion, such a survey is arbitrary, especially restricting the list of favorite films to seven. Films should be enumerated in order of preference. I avoid mentioning a favorite film that would easily occupy the first or the second place since some films meet the criteria with regard to cinematographic methods and creativity, but they have weak themes or other problems. Sometimes it is vice versa – the subject line is well-structured, the idea is attention-grabbing, but the film is technically weak. Therefore, I think it's difficult to enumerate by order of preference. We shouldn't attach excessive importance to the "top seven", because other films also deserve being named alongside the top ones.

Maia Levanidze: I'll try to be brief. I agree that evaluation is arbitrary, but the films are selected based on certain criteria that we can name. My choice is based on the following criteria: strong dramaturgy, the quality of image and an adequate and integral process. For example Street Days is a well-structured film in that the problem is outlined clearly, the subject line and the visual side are attractive for the audience. As for Zaza Urushadze's Three Houses, two of the stories are done in good style and have a well-structured subject line, but the third story has some shortcomings. The fact that we have to name the "top seven films" fills me with hope that in the nearest future something valuable will be created in Georgian cinema. If we compare the current situation with the crisis of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, we can conclude that the situation has changed for better. The very fact that the quantity and quality of the films made in the past decade enables us to name the "top seven films" is a sign of improvement. This would have been impossible several years ago.

Nana Tutberidze: Above all, I would like to mention the claims we frequently hear from filmmakers–"Our film critics do not know what real critique is, they think critique is only a negative assessment." Therefore, I have two wishes. First, it would be nice to organize a

Stills from the Films "Chantrapas", "The Clock Worker", "Tbilisi – Tbilisi", "Street Days"

meeting of filmmakers and film critics, even if the meeting involves arguments; and second– it would be useful if closed screenings and premieres of Georgian films were organized for film critics at the Cinema House. After these steps are taken, there will no longer be any claims like "No reviews are written about our films… We are criticized from a distance… There is no professional evaluation of our work…" etc.

As for the list of films, I think the period (ten years) has been selected correctly, because if we selected films made only within the last five years, the situation would be more alarming. The listed films differ in their artistic language. Some films are acceptable, while others cannot really be considered cinematographic works. Like my colleagues, I listed the films based on their cinematographic merits. The seven films I chose are more or less acceptable for me but they are not the maximum that can be achieved in Georgian cinema. The choice is based on relativity, and based on this relativity principle, I chose seven. However I cannot attach priority or give the first place to any of them.

Ketevan Japaridze: In my opinion, Georgian cinema is in a dismal situation, and there are many low quality films. I picked out some works by famous directors. The first place: Levan Zakareishvili's Tbilisi-Tbilisi, second: Koguashvili's Street Days, third: Giorgi Ovashvili's The Other Side and Vano Burduli's Conflict Zone. The fourth and the seventh are Tamar Shavgulidze's Born in Georgia and Giorgi Maskharashvili's The Watchmaker, all of which draw a completely different picture of Georgian cinema. I think the works of other directors of their generation are less interesting and lower quality. These last two directors showed the problems of the youth in an original cinematographic style.

Nino Mkheidze: It is good we have to select seven films out of the works created in the past decade. It would have been more difficult if the period was shorter. Although quantity does not mean quality, I think it is positive that we had to choose out of 58 films. The number of films accumulated in the past decade may be a precondition for the development of Georgian cinema. However, the crisis of the 90s is over yet it doesn't mean success is on its way. Simply, the fact that something has started is positive. I would like to underline Giorgi Maskharashvili's Watchmaker, which reflects an unmasked reality. This young director wanted to make a film about an important topic and did not care about mass culture, which is already a merit in itself. I also chose Zaza Urushadze's Three Houses because this film is an integral, complete organism. When a film consists of three stories, all have to be of equal artistic value.

Keti Janelidze: In my opinion, it is logical that we choose from the films made in the past decade when the Georgian National Film Center, the main funder of national films, started to function. My selection criteria are: dramaturgy, editing and artistic-technical unity. The first on my list is Levan Koghiahsivli's Street Days. This film differs from other Georgian films in that it does not speculate on the theme of drug addiction. The points are made very accurately. The real image of this fatal disease is shown profoundly. The second on my list is Zaza Urushadze's Three Houses. Although the three stories are not equally good, it is quite an acceptable film. The third is Tbilisi-Tbilisi. I also thought about Keti Machavariani's film, Salt White, which is a good attempt to avoid traditional dramaturgy. The seventh is Zaza Kolelishvili's Matchmaking 20 Years Later. My criteria are different. I may not like a film, but two aspects should be taken into account: the professional evaluation and the preferences of the audience. What we like may be disliked by the audiences, and vice versa. I simply want to say that such films also have the right to exist. I also named Mediator and The Other Side.

Irakli Mchedlishvili: The film which delighted me is Levan Zakareishvili's Tbilisi-Tbilisi. What I liked is not its artistic side, but the position of the director – as a person and author. In this film one can immediately feel the real pain of the young man in the city. His position overshadows all other technical aspects. In the 1990s Georgian directors used to say that filming was impossible due to the transition to a new reality and the disintegration of the Soviet system. I disagree with this opinion. There are nu-

merous cinematic masterpieces created in crisis periods. The main thing is the inner readiness of the author – the position and vision of the artist. This is rare in Georgia. Technical problems can be solved. The main thing is a wish, an impulsion, which is still absent in our society and in cinema. This is a personal artistic crisis, and we have to overcome it.

Lela Ochiauri: Above all, we should remember the history of Georgian cinema in the past twenty years. There were numerous political changes; one system was substituted for another. This caused crises in every field including art. It was not a smooth, "natural" substitution of one epoch by another. All this affected directors and creative processes, especially films, because filmmaking is related to an industry. There are examples in history when financial crises did not hamper the processes of development, but instead caused the development of certain trends like German expressionism, Italian neorealism and the new French wave.

All parts of the production chain, from the State to the owners of cinemas, should have been involved in the production process. But the chain was broken and we failed to adjust to new forms of production. If a director is unable to implement his idea for ten years, he can't achieve the desired result. We were used to state financing. We were not restricted in time or money. At that time the only problem was ideological censorship. Of course, the artistic crisis was not only due to the transition to new forms of production. There was a purely artistic crisis too.

Recent processes enable Georgian filmmakers to present their films internationally, though it is important to overcome the initial barriers. This is the aim of the Georgian National Film Center, to overcome these barriers, so that now important links have been established. There are master classes and workshops given by experienced producers and scriptwriters. There have been many brilliant scripts in the history of Georgian films; however we need to learn Western scriptwriting standards. The new generation of filmmakers should have their own vision, different from other directors. They have something unique to say, and they should tell it in their own artistic way. This generation should become united like the ones in the 20s, 60s and 80s.

Liana Khoshtaria: On my list, the first is Tbilisi-Tbilisi. In my opinion, this film reflects the reality of Tbilisi in a new way and this influenced me greatly – I still feel the emotion. The second on my list is Street Days. Without excessive emotion, the film tells us how our city and youth are led to death and how this horrible disease devours everything. The third is The Last Trip. I was involved in the creative process of this film and find it remarkable. The fourth is The Other Side. This film has been awarded at numerous festivals. Although the theme is painful, I cannot say the direction is brilliant, but the script is emotional and deep – and Abkhazia is our common pain. The fifth is Chantrapas. I cannot say this is Otar Iosseliani's best film, but his style is always strictly individual and appealing. I have also named Aleko Tsabadze's Rene Goes to Hollywood and Russian Triangle.

Teo Khatiashvili: When I evaluate films created in the past decade, I rely on the principle of comparison. I take into account the critical situation of this period not only regarding cinema but for all of Georgian culture. I considered the following: the events in Georgia after independence (The Other Side, Tbilisi-Tbilisi), a system of expression that creates an atmosphere appropriate to the narrative (Street days, Born in Georgia, Three Houses), as well as the originality of the narrative and its novelty for Georgian cultural space (Reverse, The Man from the Embassy).

These films are more or less based on traditional discourse and follow the socio-cultural stereotypes to a certain extent. Reverse is of special significance to me. It has an original form and uses irony to show the crisis of a dominant masculine culture. Along with other themes, this issue is also a focus of Dito Tsintsadze's The Man from the Embassy.

Keti Trapaidze: The past decade was characterized by negativism, but this is not the most essential feature. Other problems related to cinema in transition are noticeable. There are dramaturgical problems related to mentality. We argued

The Top Seven Georgian Films of the last ten years

1. Street Days – Director Levan Koguashvili
2. Tbilisi-Tbilisi – Director Levan Zakareishvili
3. The Other Side – Director Giorgi Ovashvili
4. Mediator – Director Dito Tsintsadze
5. Three Houses – Director Zaza Urushadze
6. Chantrapas – Director Otar Iosseliani
7. The Clock Worker – Director Giorgi Maskharashvili

a lot about what a real film is and all of us have chosen films that seem remarkable. In my opinion, Zaza Urushadze's Three Houses and Levan Koguashvili's Street Days are leading. Giorgi Ovashvili's The Other Side is also important, because it is always a problem to make a film based on a literary source. These films have dramaturgical integrity. The fourth is Zaza Urushadze's The Last Trip; the fifth is Giorgi Maskharashvili's Broadway 45; the sixth is Dito Tsintsadze's Mediator; and the seventh is again Giorgi Maskharashvili's Watchmaker. With regard to Zaza Kolelishvili's Matchmaking 20 Years Later I would like to stress that it is an example of non-professionalism, and this film is of lower quality than any other film based on an anecdotal subject line. Whether it is commercial or non-commercial, it does not matter. This film has nothing to do with cinema. I have chosen the films based on: integral dramaturgy, integral artistic imagery – which has been a problem for many years – and a professional attitude to complex thinking.

Archil Shubashvili: Several problems are clear, and it is good that film critics have expressed their opinions about the current state of the Georgian film industry. Frequently their opinions do not coincide, but the main thing is that the issues are being discussed. This means production is continuing and that there are films that can be considered works of art. I would like to underline that such films have also been financed by the Georgian National Film Center, which proves the value of competition (although the competition itself was not ideal). Films that undergo different stages of development are better than films spontaneously made by private studios. I agree with other film critics that the majority of such films are not works of art at all. Therefore, a serious analysis of these films is a waste of time.

On the other hand, it is a fact that such products are part of Georgian film industry. As for my choices, I made them based on the sole criterion of a "complete artistic system". The main problem of

Still from the Film
"Street Days"

Georgian films is dramaturgy, and even ordinary spectators feel it in the actions and dialogues of the main characters. This is not only the fault of directors or actors. The key problem is dramaturgy. Films should be created by people who are knowledgeable about the specifics of cinema. Any word uttered in a film differs from the one uttered in a theater. Dramaturgy is the Achilles' heel of current Georgian films and in this regard, I think Levan Koguashvili's Street Days is perfect. The theme is also appealing and topical... I could even say something pompous: show this film to youth and there will be no more drug addicts... None of the anti-drug information films (which are numerous in Georgia) can influence the social mentality as much as this one. The film is a precise description of the horrible inner world of drug addicts who cease relationships with their family and their social environment.

From an artistic standpoint, I would also distinguish Zaza Urushadze's Three Houses. I think Georgian cinema has progressed a lot with this film. I also chose Giorgi Ovashvili's The Other Side. The boy who plays the main character and the ending of the film added a lot to its integrality. From a professionalism point of view, I would name Levan Zakareishvili's Tbilisi-Tbilisi, Otar Iosseliani's Chantrapas, Dito Tsintsadze's Mediator and Aleko Tsabadze's Rene Goes to Hollywood.

I think it is too early to discuss directions, trends and thematic priorities of current Georgian cinema. Certainly, the films created in the past decade differ greatly from those made in the 60s and 70s and current films are made by a different generation with new problems and attitudes. This generation lives and works in a totally different social and political environment... So far it is impossible to speak about more concrete things; we need more time. The film industry has to develop and grow, and only then can we discuss the "ways and directions" of current Georgian cinema. I hope there will be leaders who will bring fame to the national film industry. ●

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Levan Koguashvili

>> Lika Tsikhiseli

One of the most outstanding recent Georgian films is Street Days. It's been discussed alot and we would like to tell about the creative career of its Director, Levan Koguashvili, in his own words.

I don't belong to those who dreamed from childhood of being a film director. I finished school not even knowing what I wanted to do next. Through inertia, I planned to enter the Department of Foreign Economic Geography at Tbilisi State University – I think I simply liked the word "foreign"! (He laughs).
By chance I met my friend and neighbor who told me he was going to enter the newly-opened Department of Film Management at the University of Theater and Cinema. Several days prior I had seen Forman's Amadeus and was greatly impressed. I enjoyed having seen a good film and, in general, a real work of art. Today I like this film less than I did then, but its effect on me was important. When I learned about the new Film Management Department, I decided to apply. Having felt the pleasure of seeing a great film, I wanted to be closer to cinema. It seemed rather impudent for me to try and become a film director, so I thought film management would be fine.
The teachers at the University of Theater and Cinema were good, but I can't say I learned anything of importance. Our group was very friendly, and we had fun most of the time. Sometimes of course we watched films, but didn't attach great importance to them. Serious things started a bit later.

Soon armed conflicts broke out in Georgia, followed by conflicts in Ab-

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

However, in my very first year in VGIK, I started working on my first study and watching classical films. **I realized I had found what I wanted**. The search for a profession was over

khazia and Samachablo (South Ossetia). Nobody thought about learning anymore, and many youth went off to war. Naturally, my friends and I were eager to do something important. I felt I wasn't fit enough to join the army, so I decided to become a military correspondent. At that time a new TV channel, Ibervision, was created, so I offered them my services.

They "clipped my wings" so to speak, saying that I first had to learn how to handle a camera and a microphone. So I started working for the news program "Monitor", initially as a journalist, then a presenter, then a director and so on. I always remember that time with pleasure because it was the first time I enjoyed creating something. Once you have "tasted" this pleasure, it's difficult to think of anything else. This pleasure saved me from other addictions that were common during that period: drugs, alcohol and pseudo-entertainment that took the lives of many youngsters, including some of my close friends.
I liked reporting, writing texts and editing. In fact that journalistic experience is still useful for me. I start working on a script by researching and collecting materials. I want to know as much as possible about the future characters of my film: their professions, features, interests, manner of speaking, etc. During this process I turn into a journalist and carry a note-book, a pen, a Dictaphone, and even a photo camera. I prepare questions. Much depends on the ability to communicate with people, observation etc.

Although the job at Ibervision was very interesting, after some time I realized I had to try something else. I took advantage of a lucky opportunity and went to work abroad. It wasn't easy, as I loved being a journalist and had started making commercials and video clips, so I was sorry to let all that go. However, some inner voice told me it was time to see other countries, gain experience and feel new emotions.

So I went to Vienna and spent a year there, worked for various journals and eventually became an editor. I had a good salary, but finally I realized it was not what I wanted to do all my life. Probably for every person it is most important to understand what he wants to do. Some know this from the very beginning, while others, like me discover it later. The main thing is not to compromise. There are always reasons to compromise – in my case a compromise appeared as I already had a successful career both in Ibervision and in Vienna, each of which could have tempted me. I could have ceased my search for what I wanted, thinking I had a profession already in which I succeeded both professionally and financially. However, if there are doubts, the search should not be stopped. I am sure of this, and I'm happy I already had this attitude at the age of 20.

Once they sent me from Vienna to Moscow on some business. I took advantage of the trip and went to VGIK (Russian State Institute of Cinematography). Nana Anjaparidze, mother of Archil Gelovani , the future producer of Street Days, recommended me to Marlen Khutsiev. Thus, I became a VGIK student.

Although my migration from Vienna to Moscow was a risk (because then I didn't know whether I really wanted to be a film director, or whether it was just an fascination). However, in my very first year in VGIK, I started working on my first study and watching classical films. I realized I had found what I wanted. The search for a profession was over.

I spent four years in VGIK. My student years were happy, although I can't say I learned a lot. VGIK was no longer as significant as it had been in the 60s and 70s, when famous directors like Iosseliani, Shengelaya and Rekhviashvili studied there. So I can say for sure that I didn't learn the profession of film director at VGIK. I simply saw the films I had to see, read the books I had to read, listened to music, went to museums, communicated with people of many nationalities, and, in fact, took advantage of everything a city like Moscow can offer. All this played an important role in the development of my personality, although I didn't become a professional director there.

After VGIK I had a choice – remain in Moscow where I had career prospects, or return to Georgia where the film industry was lifeless at the time. Without thinking too much, I returned to Georgia – not so much for patriotic reasons, but because

In New York I really learned something in my profession. I am grateful to my teacher, Boris Frumin (later the co-author of my scripts)

I had always felt I had to make films in Georgia. Georgia was my "territory" – emotionally and topically – and I felt an inner obligation to return.

In Georgia I made two films. One was a partly-experimental short film called 2, and the other was a pretentious, although somewhat interesting documentary film Bethlehem 2000. The most interesting, in my opinion, was a New Year's project called Givi. We shot and edited the film, but finally the client company re-edited and mixed it with other materials, so the film was ruined.

At the same time I worked for a television channel and made commercials. I was busy, but understood I couldn't keep on like that. I realized I had problems from a professional point of view. My education and skills were enough for commercials and TV programs, but not for films. I was tempted to give up filmmaking altogether. People advised, "Quit filmmaking and work for television. The film industry is dead in Georgia – television is more realistic – stop dreaming and become a realist!" and so on. I was offered various positions, but I stood firm and decided to continue my film education abroad.

I sent my credentials to the most prestigious film school in the USA – The Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. Thanks to my previous works, I passed the competition and became enrolled!

Then, through my brother's efforts and the kindness of some businessmen—whose generosity I'll never forget!
– I paid the tuition for the first year, as studying at that school was very expensive. In my second year, I was awarded a scholarship, which allowed me to continue my studies.

In New York I really learned something in my profession. I am grateful to my teacher, Boris Frumin (later the co-author of my scripts). Of course an Institute is important, but it depends a lot on who your teacher is. It has always been like that in film education. Everyone learns from someone. For me this someone was Boris Frumin.

In New York I made films that can really be considered my first films. Each of them was about Georgian illegal immigrants, as in New York I became once more confident that the material has to be "yours" and that I had to make films on Georgian themes. My student films were successful, especially the one called Debt, which participated at the Sundance Festival. Later the film was purchased by a very high-quality TV station in New York, Channel 13.

Due to this success, I became the first foreign student awarded the scholarship of a famous director, Ang Lee. Independent producers from New York became interested in my work and asked if I had a full-length feature film script about Georgian emigrants. I did have some ideas – they liked them, and I started collecting materials for the script.

I stayed with Georgian emigrants in Brooklyn and Brighton Beech. The material I collected was good – both funny and dramatic. I believed I would write a good script. However, just at that time I was contacted by a producer in Tbilisi who proposed that I shoot a film in Georgia. They gave me the story that would be the basis of my script. The story was interesting and had everything I love about films – a serious theme, a dramatic and dynamic situation with a good subject line, good roles for the actors and interesting cinematographic material.

So again I had to make a choice between staying in New York and shooting a film, or returning to Georgia to make my feature debut. After a little hesitation, I decided to return to Georgia. So I started working on the script. This is how I created Street Days. After the shootings, I returned to New York and finished my diploma work – a documentary film called Women from Georgia. The script of the feature film I had been offered to shoot in New York is still unfinished, but if there is still interest, I might return to it someday.

Recently I finished work on a new script and, if I obtain financing, I may shoot my second feature film in autumn. The film is a tragic comedy. I want to make something more positive and joyful after Street Days and other recent Georgian

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

films. Certainly, I have something to say with my new film too. I will go on working with the people I love, above all, Boris Frumin and art director Kote Japaridze. I cooperated with them in Street Days, and they are models of great professionalism and devotion to their work. Working with such people is like having a feast! I hope my circle of such people will become bigger.

I also believe that currently Georgia is one of the most interesting countries in the world for filmmaking. There is interesting material enough for several films. There is much to tell, and I hope there are people who can tell things in the right way – I already know such people.

We should remember that Georgia is the country of Jim Shvante, My Grandmother, Blue Mountains, Gela Kandelaki, Misha Kobakhidze and Otar Iosseliani.

Iosseliani should be mentioned separately. I met Otar two years ago at a festival in Germany. I occasionally met him in the street there, late at night. Once we talked about Davit Kldiashvili, and the following day he came to see Street Days. We spent that day together, strolled and drank a little, talked, shared our laughter and silence. Then we met Nikoloz Khomeriki, a good director and a wonderful person who currently works in Moscow. In the evening, when we saw Otar to his hotel, we sat on an open terrace. Suddenly Otar started singing in a low voice. The song was humorous and he smiled as he sang. However, his eyes were full of tears. I was listening to this strange song, thinking about his films and going over what I had heard from him about the director's profession and way of life, Davit Kldiashvili and thousands of other things. I realized that my generation descends from a unique culture, which is at the same time light and 'heavy'. It's very sad, even tragic, but also joyful and full of light, the same as Iosseliani's song on the terrace of a hotel in Germany. ●

I Was Born in Georgia

>> Lika Tsikhiseli

Unlike others, she is as shy as a scolded child. But when it comes to work, he becomes mobilized and disciplined. He was born in Georgia like others, yet he differs from others. The interview with him was also different.

As a child, I adored my skateboard and carried it everywhere: to school, in the street, at home.
I liked to watch thrillers with my father, and I still do.
I used to collect stamps, but I quit.
I used to wear my brother's clothes. Now I find it embarrassing.
I liked to play war-games. Now, as I've seen enough of war, I hate such games.
As children we pretended to form a military unit and struggle with bad guys. After the 9th of April we gave a name to the bad guys – the Russians. I'm still of the same opinion.
Until I was 12 I could not read properly. Then I learnt.
The money my parents gave me was spent on cassettes and books.
In summer I liked to visit Chiatura. I still do.
I hated school and studied badly. However, at school I learned how to defeat the wish to resemble others.
My parents observed my life patiently. They still do.
I was 12 when I thought about filmmaking, I don't know why. . .
At 18 I became a student, and graduated from the University at 23. Those five years are very special to me. I met people who impressed me greatly and got acquainted with people who thought like me. I live and work with them now and plan to do so in future. With these people I decided to make my first full-length film. This is how it happened. . .

I remember I came home late, switched on my computer and visited some social network. I came across a photo of my friend with some guy. I will try to explain what I saw:
The photo: black-and-white. Part of a street and a table can be seen from the

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

interior of a cafe (middle distance shot). A young fellow sits at the table. A girl stands by, tousling his hair. The girl has short tousled hair too. They smile.
I don't remember how long I stared at the photo.
I stared at it the next day too, and finally I realized I had to print it and hang it by my bed. So I did.
I realized I had to look at the photo before going to sleep and upon waking.
The photo made me think about making a film Born in Georgia. It was in 2007 if I'm not mistaken.
The name of my friend on the photo is Tina. That's why one of the characters in the film is called Tina (Nutsa Kukhianidze). Then appeared Tamri (Tamri Bziava), Giorgi (Giorgi Giorganashvili) and Nika (Vano Tarkhnishvli).
I like to read scripts and I have read scripts of many talented authors. So I know more or less what a good script is. Born in Georgia was not a script but rather a text based on my feelings. That's why my script was criticized not only by professionals, but also by my mother. I knew it had dramaturgical shortcomings. However, at the time I only wanted to express my emotions and I was interested in what I felt. Then I thought the most important thing in the film was mood.
I still think mood is very important, although hard to express. Probably I failed to express it properly, due to a lack of experience.
When I was working on the "script", many things changed in the process, with the exception of characters, mood, sounds of noise and music. I was writing the ending of the film when the war broke out in August 2008.
Then I worked on the frames. I can't draw. So if you look at the frames, you will understand nothing. However, I cooperate with Salome (Salome Skhirtladze – artist), who helps me clear up this problem. Then we showed our work to Gio (Giorgi Shvelidze – director of photography). From the very beginning I felt that both Giorgi and Salome were afraid about the statics. They even told me it might seem false. I admit I was afraid of this too, but I behaved as if I was confident. Despite their doubts, my friends stood by me till the end.
We started searching for locations. Our tastes nearly always coincided and I was happy, as I felt my friends understood exactly what I wanted.

As I was writing the "script", I thought about sounds in the film. When I finished, I told Irakli Ivanishvili (sound director) what sounds I wanted in each scene. Irakli is a maximalist, and I am completely devoid of maximalism. So I like working with him.
I showed the script to Gio (Giorgi Tsintsadze – composer). The sounds and music in the film are his creation. I told Gio I wanted a lot of music that would make the audience feel the four characters. Music should be the fifth character in the film. So it is.
I had imagined the costumes too and I told Tiko (Tinatin Kvinikadze – costumes designer) what I wanted. She easily understood me. So the characters are dressed the way I had imagined.
I, Giorgi Giorganashvili and Tinatin Kvinikadze simultaneously arrived at the same idea: one of the main characters – Giorgi - would always wear a white collarless shirt. This was not just a coincidence. The main characters, the environment, costumes and in fact everything I had created with the help of my friends was exactly what I wanted.
Then rehearsals started and went on for a month. I had no experience of working with actors, and this is obvious in the film.

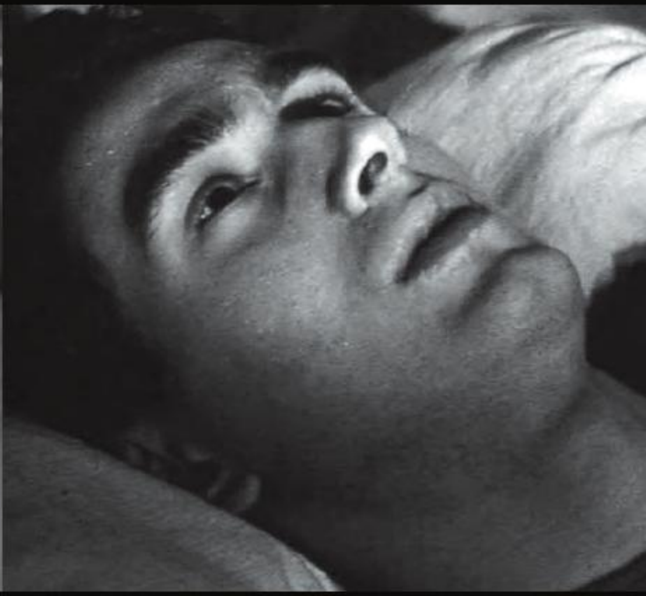
I thought a lot about the actors. I knew what they had to look like, how they should talk and move. . .but I failed to achieve what I wanted. I regret it, because the actors were very talented.

The shooting process was hard, and I prefer not to remember it.

Then followed editing. Professionals will agree with me about one important thing: when you sit at the editing table, there should be a person who feels your rhythm. I did the editing with such a person. I felt I was listening to good music and something inexplicable and mysterious was happening. I am grateful to Nodar Nosadze (editor) for this mystery.

And finally. . . I don't know why the author of the photo took it. Maybe he noticed two good-looking smiling youngsters. Maybe he noticed what I saw beyond the photo: youngsters born in Georgia. Whoever is born is Georgia has a different glance. Even if they are having a good time, even if they are delighted, sadness and despair is always present in their glance. They like to watch and observe, but keep everything inside themselves. They are not open and free. Sometimes I think they were born exhausted. They are full of love, but something prevents them from living with this feeling and letting others live with it. There is some shyness with regard to love...
One of the characters in my favorite book wants to tell a girl that he loves her. But, as he lacks the courage, he fails and just smokes a cigarette. This is the case in Georgia – we can't talk about love, and we can't make love, and we don't have enough courage.
As my friend noted, the film was an attempt to create an alternative reality. In this reality people find it difficult to talk about love and extinguish their desires in cigarettes, but their glances and actions are full of love, the courage of love.

P.S. I started by mentioning a skateboard, so. . . this summer I will probably go skateboarding. This year I intend to make only short films. ●



Waiting for a New Film
Gela Babluani >> Nutsi Kirtskhalia

As introduction I would like to quote some enthusiastic reviews of A Fleur de peau, Legacy and 13 from The Telegraph, The Guardian and The Times:
"A totally intriguing work of cinema!"
"Extremely exciting, modest, bold, strong, amazingly self-confident!"
"As elegant and awesome as films by Roman Polanski and Alfred Hitchcock!"
When you watch Gela Babluani's films these comments are neither shallow nor common. They are genuine. The films are special, totally unexpected and classics of our epoch.

It's clear that you were brought up in a film director's family, but I will ask all the same: Why did you decide to become a director? I know you first intended to become a lawyer.
G.B.: Neither my father nor other members of the family wanted me to become a film director. I wanted to become a writer. Naturally, it is possible to combine the professions of writer and director. I studied law in Tbilisi and later in France, yet, everything happened in a natural way.

Probably it was hard to give up your studies...
G.B.: Certainly. I deceived myself thinking I would return to my studies whenever I wished to. However, the profession of a lawyer was not attractive for me, and I aspired to art. Then I made a short film, and it went on and on….Father and I had always been friends. I had never called him "Dad". Since childhood, I accompanied him to the film set, although I hated to go. The tension on the set is hard for a child to understand. I also attended the editing, although I didn't pay much attention to the process. However, all this accumulated in my mind. Certainly, I have seen my father's films – I adore them and watch them frequently.

Your family relationships are evident in your films. You frequently perform

roles in each other's films. What happens on the set in this case? Do you feel more comfortable when your partner is also a member of your family?
G.B.: I have warm and friendly relationships with my brothers and sisters. Their opinion means a lot to me and we do a lot of things together. Shooting is a hard and tense process. Therefore, the presence of talented people who are also my family means a lot on the set.

Frequently young filmmakers are influenced by films made by famous directors until they find their own style....
G.B.: In general, I think one learns directing by getting acquainted with the works of great masters. Therefore, a young director should watch as many films as possible, no matter whether the films are good or bad. I cannot distinguish any particular director who has influenced me. One learns how to make a film either in 20 days or in 300 years, or never.

How did you come to the idea for the film 13? Was it inspiration or was it based on personal experience?
G.B.: First I made the short film, A Fleur de Peau, then I produced some short films in France, and only then I created 13. The main thing is to tell a story, then search for an intellectual explanation. Naturally, it is easier to discuss the past now, but in a film I am most interested in human relations and their destinies.

The main character (Sebastian) dies. Was there another version of the end in which the audience has to decide whether the main character will die or survive?
G.B.: It's the same in real life: there are things beyond our control. This is fate, or luck. One may be lucky ten times, but not for the eleventh time. We all have our Achilles' heel. Sebastian took risks for the sake of his people. He was lucky at first, but finally fortune turned its back on him.

The film was successful from the very start. It was shown in Venice and the Sundance Festival, and the idea for a remake appeared too...

G.B.: One doesn't make a film to win awards; it's silly to think that way. A prize is simply an opportunity to make another film. I doubt a director is ready for either success or failure. He simply makes a film based on a certain theme and changes things in the process. In case of author's films one cannot plan everything since complications arise during filming

Having worked in Europe, what was your impression of Hollywood? It's a totally different industry.

G.B.: I had to work under very difficult conditions, although the budget was 15 times more than for the European version. When there is money, there is no time and vice versa. It was hard to adjust to the American working style which is completely different from the European one. Arguments, advocates – all this is usual in the USA.

Despite your success in Hollywood, would you prefer to continue working with less money and more time?

G.B.: In any case, the USA is a very interesting country. You may not like it initially, but when you overcome the barriers and know concretely what you want to do, shooting in the USA becomes attractive. Frankly speaking, I have not yet decided whether to stay in the USA or to return to Europe. It depends on concrete projects. I plan things based on the job to be done.

Work on Legacy brought you to Georgia. This was a different experience. Do you plan to film in Georgia again?

G.B.: You have, naturally, heard of Julio Iglesias who used to be a footballer. Frankly speaking, I am not a fan of this singer, but he once rightly said he preferred a goal he had once scored to his entire singing career. I can say the same about working in Georgia – this is what I prefer most of all, despite the hardships in the current Georgian film industry.

As for Legacy it was my father's project and we implemented it together. For me as a Georgian, this film is very important. I would gladly implement other projects in Georgia.

This edition of Film Print is dedicated to Levan Korinteli. As I know, you had met and even had joint plans

G.B.: Yes, we met and discussed some plans. Unfortunately, the plans were not to be implemented... As for my plans, I would like to shoot a film in the USA. This film will be based on my own script.

Will it be an independent film or a Hollywood production?

GB: Hollywood – however, it is a US-European project since the European partners are also involved, though mostly in post-production. By the way, the same system was planned for 13, but it took years to implement this and the initial idea was not implemented fully. Now I want to avoid any unpleasant experiences and that's why I found European partners. The shootings will take place in the USA, but the European side will control things.

Due to your busy schedule, your visits to Georgia are rare ...

G.B.: Yes, I have not been in Georgia for quite a long time, and I do miss it!

Have you seen any recent Georgian films?

G.B.: I haven't managed to see many and am interested in seeing more. Georgians are very talented, but our main problem is organization. All Georgian films are rather classical. In my opinion, the current Georgian film industry needs a good school and a well-structured financial system to enable these films to travel elsewhere. State support alone is not enough to establish a film structure. I hope the coming generation will solve this problem. I strongly believe they will! ●

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Zura Kipshidze
The Intersection of Georgian Cinema and Theater

>> Ketevan Trapaidze

Zura Kipshidze is a popular star in recent Georgian TV series, cinema, theater and other projects. He has that special talent for acting in both film and theater. We asked his opinion concerning the current state of Georgian film industry and how it intersects with theater.

We often discuss the two facets of an actor's profession, theater and cinema – what are the points where these two intersect?

Z.K.: I think there is great difference between the two. In fact they are two different professions. The feelings, behavior – everything is different. I studied at VGIK (Moscow Institute of Cinematography). In the first year at this Institute actors and future directors of photography traveled by train and learned a lot during those these trips. The cameraman, director of photography and actors got used to being together. It's hard to think when a camera is directed towards you. Today it is difficult to realize nobody needs your profession, while before there was great demand for talented actors. That time has passed unfortunately, and even our teachers have passed away...

You mentioned your teachers. In some cases good teachers are not successful in their creative career, and vice versa...

Z.K.: That's true. However, it's better when a good artist is also a good teacher. For example, Mikheil Tumanishvili: he staged numerous plays, but was proud of only a few. The same with the actor's profession – usually in a group of actors only one or two are especially talented. An actor is obliged to learn speaking and movements, as well as fencing, swimming and horse-riding. One can always tell when an actor is uneducated because they just recite a text without understanding what it's about. Many actors are too lazy to read scripts and plays, but they are so important! Georgians are especially artistic by nature.

There are initiatives to open small studios now and I support these initiatives in every way I can. Mikhail Chekhov said, "Laws are a springboard for talented people and a torture for untalented ones". We should constantly read and learn things. Even the most talented actors should work hard. Mikheil Tumanishvili described how the great actor Sergo Zakariadze worked on a role – as if he was in his first year of studies... He worked hard to shape the character he played – all great actors work this way.

How did you start acting in films?

Z.K.: It's hard to remember, because I was very young then. I went in for horse-racing. Once they needed a child for some film, took my photos and I became an understudy. I just ran about in the film Matsi Khvitia...

Yet there were hard times: I was dismissed from school, and from the Institute, because in the first year at the Institute a student had no right to take part in films. I was a first-year student when I took part in Worldly Life and When Almonds Bloomed. Then I went to Moscow.

Which film role was most important for you?

Z.K.: My collaboration with Goderdzi Chokheli was very important. I am not ashamed of this role, although it seems a bit "pretentious". I also liked the role of the aristocrat in Bravo, Alber Lolish! and my role in The Trip of the Young Musician. My role in Zaza Urushadze's Three Houses was a minor one, but very interesting. When I evaluate myself I cannot be objective, so I just say whether or not I am ashamed of certain roles. Out of 70 films, there are only a few that I am not ashamed of. If my posterity is not ashamed of them either, it means I was successful.

Alongside with your good looks, there is a natural expansiveness in the way you play your roles, which is hard to do in films. I think Georgian cinema

has not used your abilities to the utmost!

Z.K.: That's my fault too. I failed to use most of my abilities or to be in the right place at the right time. Yet even during crisis periods I acted a lot, whether the role was interesting or not.

We should also mention Three Houses. This film is discussed a lot in this issue of Film Print.

Z.K.: That film is very interesting, and working with Zaza Urushadze was pleasant. I was happy to cooperate with such professional directors of photography and art directors, to say nothing of my partners – Murman Jinoria, Nineli Chankvetadze and others. Although Nineli Chankvetadze and Nino Burduli performed minor roles, they added a lot to the film. The editing was good, and I'm simply crazy about Gio Tsintsadze's music. I met him at the premiere and thought he was there just to watch the film, then I learned who he was and that it was his music. I was delighted! Sometimes music overpowers the film, but this was not the case with Gio. He was a marvelous person and knew the value of everything.

You gained a lot of experience on the stage, and probably your film experience also helps you in the theater?

Z.K.: That is certainly true. It isn't done on purpose but happens automatically...

We should also remember the directors of the older generation...

Z.K.: I remember Medea, for example, which was very interesting. I also adore Samanishvili's Stepmother, that was staged at the Rustaveli Theater – I have never seen anything like it. Medea was a mixture of arbitrariness and reality. The chorus consisted of stars like Dodo Chichinadze, my mother Elene Kipshidze, Tamar Skhirtladze, Mzia Makhviladze and others. They worked energetically and enthusiastically. Today no actor would be happy to be in a chorus, yet it was a wonderfully staged play!

What is most interesting about the new generation of directors?

Z.K.: Cinema is different from theater because it's an industry. I would like to mention Levan Koguashvili's Street Days—not because my son Giorgi has a role in the film, but because it's about the harsh reality of present-day Georgia. Guga Kotetishvili performs the main part extremely well.
Our main problem in Georgia is that we often close our eyes trying to avoid problems, instead of paying attention to the current state of society and using it in our art. Instead, we stay in a permanent state of transition and fail to achieve any results. If we want to form a better society we have to plan for that future, right now – in the present. ●

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Nino Khomasuridze. Honorary Citizen of France and working with Spain's Pedro Almodovar

>> Beka Elbakidze

Her career started with a popular play in Marjanishvili theater, "Posterity". She once refused to participate in a "scandalous" project by the French director Catherine Breillat or to sign a 2 million dollar contract with Hollywood, but now her career continues in European films.

Khomasuridze says she changes moods easily and that's why she sometimes refuses important offers. Everything in her career has been spontaneous. Several months' pause was always followed by something interesting. A French film in which she played was awarded a Caesar, and she became a discovery of the Cannes Festival. Julie Bertucelli's Since Otar Left was her talisman. Pedro Almodovar saw her and invited her to participate in his film.

Nino Khomasuridze recently returned from Spain.

Julie Bertucelli's Georgian-French project has become your "business card". What happened in your career before this film?

N.K.: In the 1990s we lived in a complete vacuum. Georgian cinema was dead, and so was I. A tragedy in my family left me depressed and I stayed locked indoors. I returned to life when I started to dub films and soap operas with Murman Jinoria, for money. I had not participated in serious films before the French one, and worked at Marjanishvili Theater where I was invited by Giga Lortkipanidze. My first role in "Posterity" was lucky; it was followed by numerous plays and tours. Then I took part in a popular play "The Generation of Jeans" and the plays of the Theatrical Cellar. Parallel to the theater, I played in TV series... In 2002 Julie Bertucelli came to Tbilisi. She had cooperated with Otar Iosseliani for years. I went to the casting by inertia, as many actors were being tested for roles and my success was unexpected. To tell the truth, I did not like the script. Later I used to joke that it took me much longer to go to auditions than to the shootings.

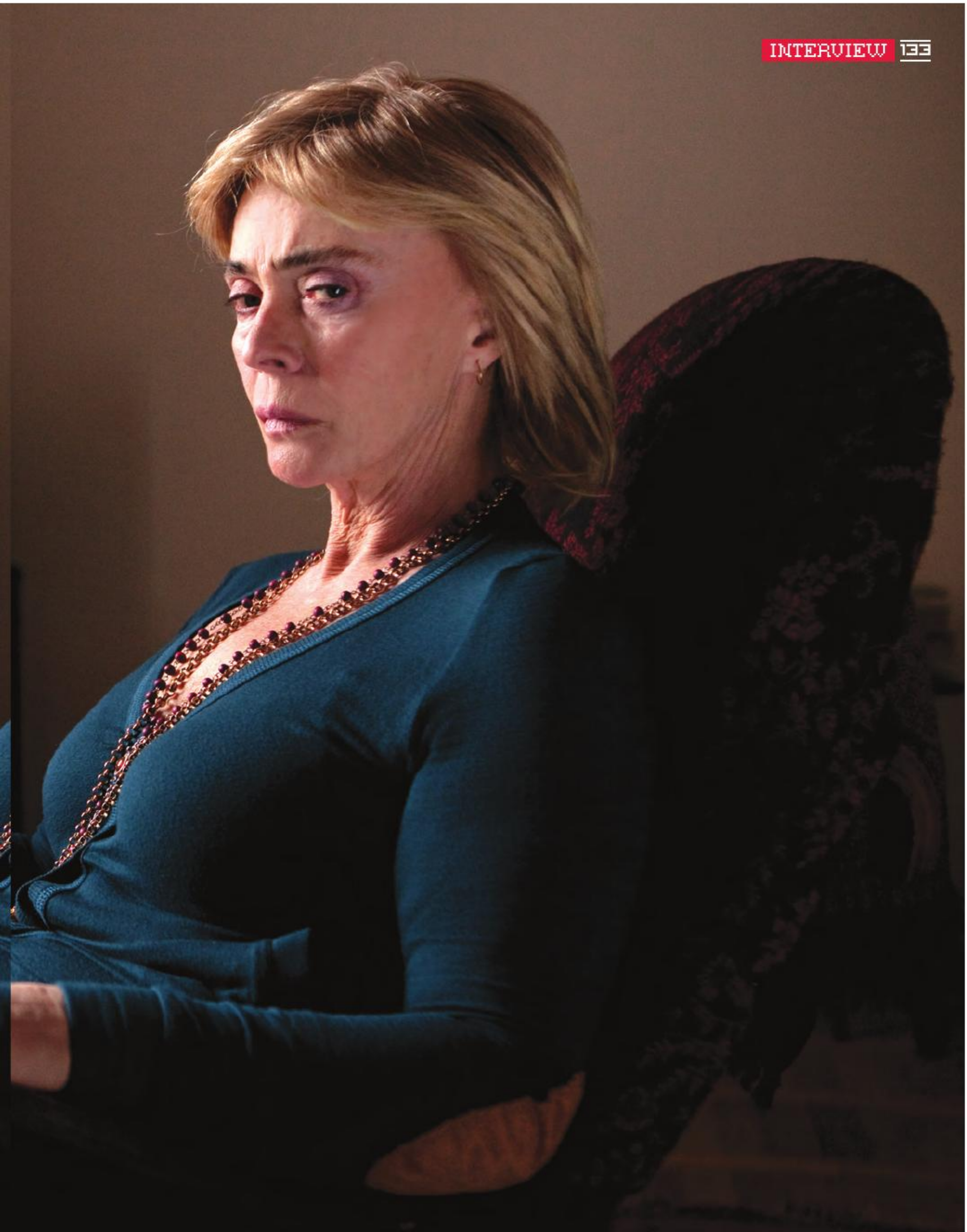
You participated in two films by Julie Bertucelli: Since Otar Left and Friends for the French. How do you like working with Julie?

N.K.: Julie is mostly a documentary director. She has no special attitude towards actors like many other contemporary French directors. There is nothing new. They simply have a marvelous technical base and are very organized in the working process. I think contemporary European cinema is mostly superficial with the exception of some films. The majority of current European films do not focus on persons with their pains, inner state, or problems – acting is also technical. Probably I am nostalgic about old French cinema so I am too strict in my evaluation of the new wave.

It is hard to find one's place in Western cinema, especially for emigrants. But you have been lucky; moreover, you were a discovery of the Cannes Festival.

N.K.: Yes, this happened in 2003. A year later, our film was awarded a Caesar. It was unimaginable for me, especially because this award was created at that time. I was very happy and felt I was a real actress! The Festival in Cannes is a magnificent celebration – every actor dreams of being there and breathing the

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili



air of that special environment… The Festival was especially interesting that year: nearly all the film stars came. The focus of the festival was on two hostile beauties – Nicole Kidman and Penelope Cruz – who frequently created scandals due to Tom Cruise.

Did you meet Pedro Almodovar at this festival?
N.K.: No, it happened later, although I had hoped to see him then. I had taken a Georgian traditional hat to present to him. Unfortunately, we did not meet in Cannes. Pedro left the day I arrived. Instead, I met Wim Wenders. Finally I gave the hat to Danny de Vito.

Before you met Almodovar, there was an important offer that would bring you world fame...
N.K.: Yes, in Paris I went to a party at Dinara Drukarova's place. She was my partner in Julie Bertucelli's film. Dinara's husband is a film producer so there were lots of stars like Catherine Deneuve, Chiara Mastroianni, Gerard Depardieu, and Jean-Paul Belmondo. This is where I met the "outrageous" director Catherine Breillat who offered me a role in her film.

But you refused – why?
N.K.: By the way, before she made the offer to me, she had tried many actresses, even Isabelle Adjani who had wanted to be in the film. When she explained what was in the script, I refused, because I would be unable to play the erotic scenes. Those who have seen Breillat's films will understand what I mean. Negotiations went on for a long time. She offered me fantastic fees and although I could have built my career on this film I wouldn't do it. I don't know why: maybe my Georgian mentality and my upbringing... Of course, I don't criticize actresses who take part in erotic scenes! Simply I could not do it. You can blame my restricted inner freedom!

You refused Catherine Breillat, but agreed to take part in Almodovar's film. How did you meet?
N.K.: Almodovar saw me in Julie's film Since Otar Left then got in touch with the producers. Finally we talked on Skype and he made the offer. I often wonder what he liked about me in that film!

Was this an ordinary thing in your life?
N.K.: Of course I did not faint in the case of Almodovar (although I once almost fainted when I saw Alain Delon), but before I went to Madrid, I shaved my hair and gained 10 kg. This was Almodovar's request. We met as if we were old friends and started working immediately. My role was changed during the process. Initially the character was just "any" immigrant woman, but Pedro decided the woman would be Georgian and her name would be Nina, same as mine.

What is Almodovar's style of working – is it different?
N.K.: Above all, he's a real professional – the crew calls him "Maestro". He asked a lot of questions at first, to get a better idea of my personality. It's very easy to work with him as he understands women very well. He tends to every need of the most capricious actresses, like Marisa Paredes and Victoria Abril. His favorite is Penelope Cruz, who has learnt a lot from Pedro. He has shaped her like a sculptor and they understand each other extremely well. He tries to adjust the role to the actress and not vice versa. That's why his films are so successful.

Your partners in this film are Hollywood stars. Please tell us about them.
N.K.: The contract forbids me to say much about the film, but the main characters are Javier Bardem and Penelope Cruz who play a married couple. My character is their maid. I think the role is interesting, and have already played in several scenes with Javier Bardem. To my surprise, I found I could cope with comic scenes quite well. Now there is a pause in shooting as Pedro is in Hollywood working on another film and Javier Bardem is taking part in a new version of James Bond. Our shootings will start up again in spring, so I'll leave for Madrid.

You worked in the theater for many years. Do you miss the stage?
N.K.: I liked the stage when I was young. Now I prefer films, although working with a talented director is pleasant everywhere. To tell the truth, both fields are in crisis now. The level of theater is at its lowest in Spain. The film industry is also in crisis, with the exception of some films. This is not only a financial crisis, but also a creative one. The charm of Italian neorealism and author's films will never be restored.

How would you evaluate Georgia from a European point of view – is there a great difference?
N.K.: Not in the least. I have been to many countries and the more I travel the more confident I become that we lack nothing – be it culture, education or potential. Frequently our ambitions lead to catastrophe, but this can be overcome. There's nothing special in Europe that we don't have. Simply we need more ways to get things done, more investments and encouragement to lead us in the right direction. ●

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

The Director is Most Important for Me

>> Ketevan Trapaidze

Nato Murvanidze is a familiar name in contemporary Georgian cinema. Lullaby, Jako's Lodgers, Three Houses and other famous films are associated with this actress. It can be said without exaggeration that her name is a guarantee for a film's popularity.
It is always interesting when an actress discusses her profession and even more so in Murvanidze's case because her family tradition is linked to the art of acting. Apart from her unusual appearance, her manners and style of speaking, Nato Murvanidze is distinguished by her special attitude about working in films. This is obvious in interviews too. Becoming another person, drawing a portrait by describing social and psychological problems of the main character, Murvanidze is known for her multidimensional characters.

Nato, your career started in a difficult period for Georgian cinema. How would you characterize this period? Which roles have been of artistic importance for you? What is the key difference in the work structure and technique of theatrical actress and a film actress?

N.M.: Yes, there is certain difference, although it is the same profession.... Unfortunately, after graduating from the University of Theater and Cinema, actors went to the shooting set with only theatrical experience. My first work in cinema was Only Once– a film by Manana Anasashvili, based on the play by Shadiman Shamanadze. This was an important experience which taught me how one should not work in a film. Only in the recent years have I begun to see myself as a film actress. New intonations have appeared, which were absent in my earlier work. Roles in films let me correct mistakes. In this profession nearly everything depends on the director (this is the same in theater, but in cinema it's especially obvious). I have accumulated a certain experience. To tell the truth, I have not seen any of my films apart from Three Houses. In Three Houses I play only in the middle part, which ends quickly.... In other cases I find it difficult to watch myself in films. I immediately realize it isn't what I had intended to do. Of course, such evaluations are not fair with regard to the author of the film. Although Lullaby was shown many times, I have only seen some fragments. Probably in twenty years' time I will have seen all of my films, but so far I have no time to watch them from beginning to end. Someday I may watch these films with pleasure just to enjoy seeing myself young... (she laughs).

I think you create very fascinating portraits in films, aand you easily perceive the cinematographic structure. This is due to hard work and intuition. Frequently the film's reality brings some unexpected features to the surface. So far, audiences mainly know you from Lullaby, Three Houses and Jako's Lodgers. What were the challenges and positive sides related to these roles?

N.M.: I can't remember any challenges with regard to Lullaby as it was created long ago. I do remember positive emotions. It was my first time on a shooting set with a crew, and I was charmed.
It was 1992 when there was war in Abkhazia, and making the film helped us forget the hard reality. I think using such aesthetics is common for hard periods. Nana Janelidze is a very clever person, and probably she thought such a film was necessary, to overcome post-war depression. No matter whether the war is lost or won, depression will definitely occur. Anyway, at that time shooting this film created a kind of "happy island". I was 22, which is an age to escape reality. Nana Janelidze, Giorgi Beridze, Marina Kushitashvili and others were a marvelous group of professionals, so I learned a lot. I went to the premiere of the film, but watched only the beginning. Then I left the hall. I had fever, probably because I was very nervous. So there was nothing negative, apart from the war going on in the country. My close friend died in the war and I still feel the pain. My name is Nato, but my deceased friend called me Nata. In the credits of Lullaby my name appeared as Nata. All this was very emotional for me. It seemed I had changed my name in memory of my friend...
As for Jako's Lodgers, the material itself is very complex. There was a phase of creative "wrestling" during the shooting period that was very challenging.
Zaza Urushadze's Three Houses is special to me. We live in the same city and work within one small space, so it was strange we didn't know each other before. I have not worked with many directors but I know them personally. When I was contracted to play in Jako's Lodgers, Zaza was working on the first part of Three Houses. In some magazine I came across photos of both films and learned that Zaza was shooting Three Houses.
In February they invited me to take a part in Three Houses. Zaza said no audition was necessary. He said I just had to read

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

the script and, if I liked it, I would start working in March. The script for the second part was changed subsequently. The initial version was a totally different story. So the final version was written in two days. Now the director is a great friend of mine. The film helped us find each other. He often recalls how he called the art director and told him the shooting would start in March and I would perform the main character. The art director demanded the script, but Zaza answered there was no script yet (she laughs). It is flattering when a director writes the script based on you. When I read the script I told him no negotiations were necessary, that it didn't matter when we would start working or how long it would take.

The script is only eight pages. When I started reading, my attention was caught by the episode in which Elene (the main character) enters a house, stops at the entrance, turns back and demands a cigarette... I immediately understood the script was intruguing. It seems at first like there is nothing special in that episode, and although I mostly sit and remain motionless during the entire film, there are amazing dynamics going on. In all the scenes I sit still and don't run around or hurry, but the film is very dynamic. There's everything in the film. The third part has its own special rhythm. Besides, the style of direction of photography is different in all three parts. This film made me love working in cinema. Zaza always knows exactly what he wants from the very outset. There was one word I had to utter in the film, but the word irritated me. Zaza then explained the need for this word so well that I didn't question anything more. Working with him is very easy and pleasant.

I agree this film is one of the most interesting works in recent Gerogian cinema. It is not easy to choose the acting profession, and all of us are influenced by our family members, traditions and important people...Were you categorical in choosing your profession?

N.M.: I've often talked about this and I feel embarrassed to repeat myself. Initially I wanted to become a painter and had to study painting before passing the entrance exams at the Academy of Arts. By chance I accompanied my friends to the exams at the University of Theater and Cinema, and suddenly I made up my mind to pass the entrance exams there instead. As my excitement grew, I started

to prepare poems and other material for the exams. My grandmother, who was a famous actress called Medea Chakhava, was concerned. She said it would be hard, and that the family traditions and society's respect to my family members would hamper my own individual development as an actress. So I concealed my intentions.
None of the actors in my family came to the University to support me during the exams. My only supporters were my aunt (a dentist) and my sister (a medical doctor) (she laughs). At that time my grandfather Kote Makharadze went to the Ministry of Culture on some business (the Ministry was located next to the University of Theater and Cinema). When they saw him, they told him to go away. He was surprised, as he did not know anything about my plans. At the exam, a dance teacher asked me whether I was Maka Makharadze's daughter.
I denied it, so everything happened without much fuss. Of course, it was unbelievable that I passed, because at that time the competition was severe – thirty applicants for each place.

My next question may be too general: what kind of films do you like?
N.M.: I can't mention any concrete films. My interests change with time. There was a time when I adored Tarkovsky, then I discovered Ingmar Bergman with his "monumentally cool" mood, so I almost forgot Tarkovsky. When I watched Pasolini's films, I forgot about other Italian directors I had once loved. About three years ago I watched Peter Brook's Moderato Cantabile and fell in love with the film, though don't usually admire this kind of cinema. Recently I was very impressed by Michael Haneke's The White Ribbon. So I can't say what kind of films I like. The same can be said with regard to literature, though my interest towards Vazha Pshavela is permanent. I like Mikheil Javakhishvili whose works are visual. One thing can be said for sure: I like so-called "boring" and "dull" films.

I agree with you. I feel the same with regard to Ingmar Bergman and Scandinavian playwrights.
N.M.: Maybe they are not outstanding in position or philosophy, but their dramaturgy is well-structured.

Is there any rupture between working on the stage and in films? What factors influence the final decision in such cases?
N.M.: I don't feel any rupture. For a director the most important things are the script and dramaturgy. For an actor, the director is of prime importance. In any play, even a poor one, you trust the director and he creates something wonderful with you. He knows why he chooses this or that play. And vice versa: the play may be marvelous, but a director can spoil it. So the director is decisive, along with the script-writer, art director etc. If the director's work is weak, an actor may save the play on the stage, but with a film this is impossible.

The Georgian film industry underwent a severe crisis, but it brought results. Currently positive processes are under way. Is there a concrete factor or field that contemporary filmmakers should focus on?
N.M.: It's difficult to speak about cinema. However, many things should be improved in theatrical education. Besides, we should be less ambitious. Uriel Akosta was staged in Georgia in the 1920s, and the film My Grandmother was created in the same period. The fields of theater and cinema should not be ruined just because of somebody's ambitions. Talent lives on in Georgian genes, and these genes will start acting some day. While there are talented directors and teachers, their experience should be used to the utmost. Future filmmakers should have appropriate technical material – cameras, editing equipment etc. Besides, if I, for example, mentor a group, I shouldn't be too selfish, but should also invite other mentors. Once every two or three months I should invite other actors to share their experience with the students. This was a frequent and fruitful practice for the mentors of future directors to invite their colleagues, like Lana Ghoghoberidze invited Eldar Shengelaya to teach her group.
The new generation of filmmakers has suffered a lot, because they graduated from the University at the age of 25, and only had an opportunity to make their first films at the age of 45... Problems related to production make things difficult. I am happy that the development of the film industry here is under way, and that we have overcome the crisis. Of course, there are good films and bad but this is necessary in order to understand what is good and what is bad – so let them shoot... Televisions should not buy poor products and feed their viewers low quality films. This is a different matter... Films can be shot by mobile phones. So what?! The more, the better. Quantity allows choice.

Yes, but there is a serious difference between real films and non-cinematographic works. Quality can be discussed only in the case of films. A well-informed audience always knows whether the product is made by an amateur or a professional filmmaker. N.M.: Even in the process of making low quality films, people learn something. Practice is very important for a director. My son Data used to say, "Film Direction resembles the profession of a foreman". A theatrical director might walk about wearing an eccentric scarf , but a film director should roll up his sleeves and get to work.

Are you currently involved in any film?
N.M.: There are some plans, although the concrete dates aren't set, as shooting always depends on finances. The main thing is that the production of films should go on, and my involvement in films is of secondary importance! (she laughs).

Thank you very much! ●

Nana Jorjadze

>> Nutsa Shubashvili

In the 1980s Nana Jorjadze showed the hardships of our country to foreign audiences and brought the Georgian mixture of sadness and humor close to audiences worldwide. Love, nostalgia, humor, sadness – these are the main themes of this well-known director who has promoted Georgian cinema in Europe and America. How does this filmmaker, now residing abroad, view Georgia? What is hidden behind the sad humor of her films, and what does cinema mean to her? Nana Jorjadze answers these questions.

Many of the main characters in your films are foreigners who happen to be in Georgia. Despite the difficult situation here, they are happy. You have spent many years abroad, so what is the image of our country now for you, as an emigrant?

N.J.: Naturally, I love my country, and the way I see it may be subjective. However, I try to assess the situation objectively and look at the current events in Georgia as if I were a foreigner. The characters of my films are frequently foreigners, but they don't evaluate Georgia as tourists. They arrive as guests, but become native and share the fate of the country. I want the audience to fall in love with Georgia like my main characters do, and feel the pain of the country like Georgians do.

For centuries our country has suffered injustice and hardships because it is a small unprotected state. Unfortunately, none of our neighbors have helped us sincerely and generously. Even now there is no country Georgia can rely on. It is painful to realize that in joy and feasting everyone is your friend, but they can thrust a knife into your back. Probably this is because we are bestowed with many merits and other countries lack them. Genghis Khan made a wish – that in Mongolia there should be nothing to cause the envy of others. In this way he tried to avoid the invasion of his country and his country still follows this principle. However, Georgia is distinguished by its spiritual beauty, natural beauty, its location and landscapes, the talent and humor of its people and their love of life. Great civilizations have disappeared from the map, but we continue to exist. Probably we have not fulfilled our mission yet. I am full of hope that Georgia will achieve unity and integrity. The main thing is to stay faithful to our country...

The events in your films Robinsoniada or My English Grandfather and 1001 Recipes of a Chef in Love grew out of our country's severe difficulties and reflect the first days of the establishment of the Soviet regime in Georgia. However, the main characters remain cheerful and full of joy. Do these characters resemble you?

N.J.: There is a part of me in every character, be it a positive or a negative person. It does not matter whether this is a man, a woman, a child, a Georgian, a foreigner, life or death. I don't have any purely negative characters in my films, because I never judge people. For me, there is no black or white. I perceive the world as a unity of good and evil. I love all of my characters so, naturally, I share a lot with them and receive much from them too.

In the shooting process, I often improvise. I am guided by my characters and their feelings. I communicate with the characters and not the script. The image often takes us in a different direction, and new ideas appear in the process.

For me, art is mystery and magic. I make films the same way I live – I have lost the boundary between reality and imagination. I would call it magic realism. I like reading, to find what is new for me. I also try to tell stories in which the audiences don't see the current reality. Instead, I offer them something new and unknown.

A film is an emotional trip. It is rare for a film to be equally appreciated by the audience and the people whose opinion I am interested in. These people may be strangers, they may be scattered around the world, or even deceased, but I make films for these concrete people and not for the audience in general.

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

A film is born three times: in the script, in the process of shooting and in editing.

Before you started film production, you worked in a different field of art. You graduated from the Department of Architecture and worked as an architect before making films. What attracted you to cinema? Have you ever regretted the change of profession despite your successful career? We all know that film production is accompanied by numerous difficulties.

N.J.: No, I've never regretted this, and am sure I never will. For me, film production is not a profession; it's a way of life. I evaluate everything from a film's viewpoint. Daily routine and private lives are of minimal importance. Architecture has taught me a lot: the sense of space, organization of the environment, composition and style. So architecture plays an important role in my life also with regard to film production.

My first contact with the cinema took place when I was in my first year at school. Members of a film crew came to our school to select children for a film. I was agitated. And – Oh God, they chose me! I was nearly insane. I remember I had to say just one phrase. They warned us not to stare into the camera. As soon as they started to shoot, I gazed at the camera. I spoiled three or four takes. I still remember how awful I felt when they asked me to go out. I thought my life was over. I was so ashamed that I had high temperature when I came home.

I was 12 or13 when I saw As Long As You're Near Me with Otto Fischer and Maria Schell. Fischer performed a film director, and there was a scene of a shooting set in the film. Then and there I decided to become a film director. On Mondays and Thursdays I missed school, because on these days new films appeared at the cinema. The teachers called my parents, and I was moved to another school, but I went on seeing films. In that period masterpieces of cinema were released in Tbilisi. I was in the seventh year at school when my father took me to meet Merab Kokochashvili, who had just graduated from the University of Theater and Cinema. I still remember his voice. He talked to me and explained many things. When I left, I felt I was already a film director. Then I read lots of books and scripts. I entered the Academy of Fine Arts, because at that time there was no film school in Tbilisi.

But I was unable to go to Moscow – I became a mother, and it was impossible to leave the baby. Later I did become a post-graduate student in Moscow. In 1974, a film department opened at the University of Theater and Cinema in Tbilisi. This changed my life and I became Tenghiz Abuladze's and Irakli Kvirikadze's student.

One of the characteristics of your films is a nostalgic sadness. The films reflect the contemporary world and tell about the recent past of our country, yet what is the reason for the so-called retro style of your films?

N.J.: This is not nostalgia. When you tell a story after a certain time, you evaluate events more objectively, as if watching the past from a distance. I have always been interested in our past, our mission and faith, etc. To a certain extent, all of my films reflect the history of our family and ancestors. I am very emotional, so it is important for me to keep a distance from what I am telling. I try to express the feelings and sensations that are comprehensible and close to people of all nationalities. I always make Georgian films, but the stories that seem so Georgian are usually close to people everywhere. Probably this is due to my background. My family adored Georgian poetry, literature and history, but were also well-acquainted with the culture and art of other countries. So I learned and perceived everything. My parents tried to instill a love for literature in their children and we traveled a lot and gathered information about art. Georgian culture is a world treasure, but in the Soviet period we were unable to show this to the world. It was impossible then to tell foreigners about our country, its culture and history.

Unfortunately, values change with time, and what was important for us is no longer important for the young generation. This is sad. There are so many things we should be proud of, and we should constantly bear in mind the ancient history of Georgia.

You were awarded the Golden Camera in Cannes and you are the only Georgian director whose film was an Oscar nominee. How did your career develop after this success?

N.J.: Participation in authoritative international festivals and getting prestigious awards certainly helped me to get to know famous filmmakers and film-stars. I was proud to have achieved success, although it is better to forget about pride and use the success for further development.

Nothing is permanent. I am grateful for everything that has happened in my life and that has become part of my biography. Now I assess those events as ordinary. Maybe it was mere chance, yet in any case my success does not mean I am better than anyone else. Simply, I was lucky. My international success influenced my career, however. I found foreign partners, and producers wanted to cooperate with me, so I made new films. It is hard to explain why my stories attract producers or companies. I tell them my vision and sometimes I even perform the entire film.

Probably you are aware of the processes currently underway in the film industry. Have the priorities changed, and if yes, in what way? Films created by you and your contemporaries focused on the feelings and features of the characters. What are the trends now?

N.J.: Generations change and it's natural that every period in film history has different heroes. Each generation has something to say and the younger generation has its vision. However, with this new energy and spirit, the importance of values has decreased. I have noticed a certain despair in the directors of the

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

new generation. Their films are depressive and devoid of humor. I think humor saves people even in the most difficult situations. Probably these features of the new generation are due to the current situation and social background.

For objective reasons, there was a long pause in Georgian film industry. Despite this, I believe Georgian cinema will be restored, because we take pride in our film history, and it cannot disappear without leaving its trace. In my youth it was believed that filmmakers must be extremely educated. Now they think only talent and intuition are enough. However, education and background are obligatory in film production like in all other fields.

Please tell us about the actors who are in your films, especially Pierre Richard and Ramaz Chkhikvadze.

N.J.: I select actors based on concrete roles. In 1001 Recipes of a Chef in Love I needed exactly the character created by Pierre Richard. In this film the audience saw a totally different Pierre Richard – a sad and wistful person who had suffered. Ramaz Chkhikvadze was full of humor and irony, a great actor and a master of improvisation. He had a brilliant sense of humor and love of life, which was obvious until his death. He had amazing energy and unforgettable charm. I am still amazed at his cheerfulness which was contagious for the audience. He was extraordinary in all he did.

And, finally, when someone wants to communicate with you, they ask: "Is Nana in Georgia?" Do you plan to come back and make your audiences happy with your new films?

N.J.: No matter how far I am from Georgia, I am linked to it through my feelings, wishes and, hopes – present, past and future. I may be far away in a physical sense, but my anchor is here. Unfortunately, I have been unable to make films with Georgian financing and have to go where I find financing. It will always be like that while I can make films and feel I am needed. Currently I have an opportunity to shoot a new film, but unfortunately, again far from Georgia... Of course, I feel the attention and interest for me in Georgia, but I don't believe I am really necessary here. Nobody has yet offered to make a film with me, which is all right. Probably it is as it should be. However, my heart and soul will always be with Georgia. ●

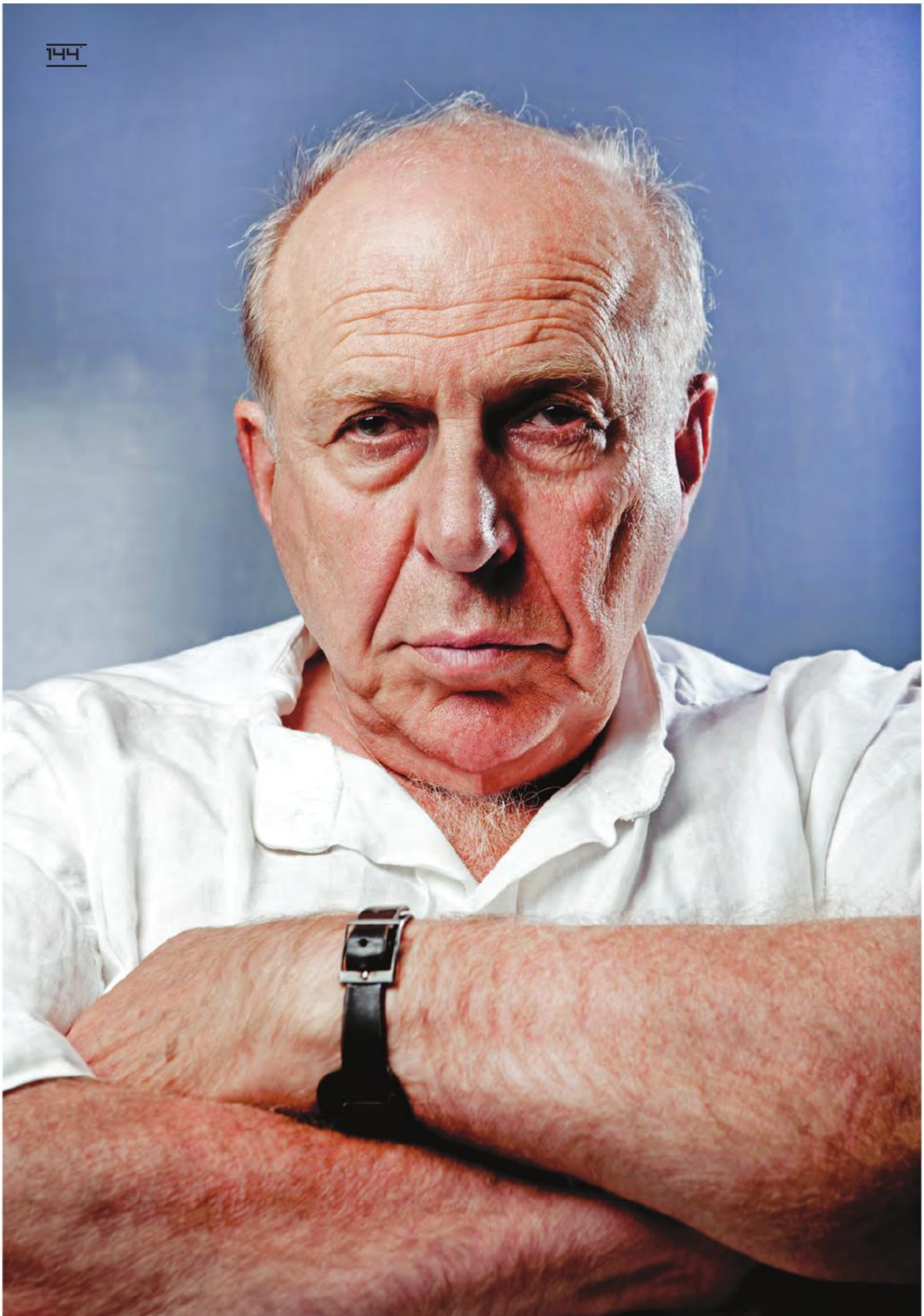


Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

An Artist about Art
Gela Kandelaki

>> Irine Zhordania

What is the main thing you like about films?

G.K.: Filmmaking is a field of art, so let's speak about art. A lot has been written about the aims of art. I want to express my opinion here and emphasize painting, because painting was initially my spiritual support and great friend.

A genuine work of art is created when an artist relies on his subconscious, works sincerely and is not affected by earthly matters. For example, Cezanne painted a picture, you see it and establish a relation with the picture, and thus touch the author's spirit and know how he felt when he was painting. This is a very intimate moment.

Of course, when I speak of the subconscious, I don't mean that education is unnecessary. It is essential, especially in such a complicated field as film direction. You should grasp the structure of film making, learn about the films and styles of great directors and study dramaturgy, especially the classical ones. You should also understand musical structures. All this is part of the profession. However, in the process of creation one has to be absolutely free. If not, the work of art is calculated, and this means the death of art. A work of art may be refined and precise, as well as grammatically correct, but it will be devoid of spirit – the spirit present in the works of Cezanne, Van Gogh, Pirosmani and Leonardo Da Vinci. Therefore, when I teach young filmmakers, I am extremely demanding about learning technique, but I also tell them that in the creative process they should above all focus on the spiritual side.

No painter will draw a good picture if he has not studied classical pencil drawing. The exceptions are geniuses like Pirosmani, or Glenn Gould who does not need to practice scales. This level of art is close to divine. And I'm talking about human art that fills our life.

When your potential seems to have run out and you think you are at a dead end, you remember what you learned and realize your weaknesses. In the process of working, when I think I can implement my ideas, I need to find parallels in certain structures. This is a kind of support, and in the shooting process it enables me to be free and calm, and to improvise. This is like insurance. Your house is insured against disaster. You know what sensation you have to get in every episode and what you have to do. In the process of shooting you see your task clearly, and the ways of achieving it with your main character.

When I finished writing the script of The Misfortune, I was unable to find that support. By chance, I heard a Gurian song, and I understood I had to deal with polyphony. What I needed was a fugue structure: the theme of one person is replaced by another…then followed by the reverse, and so on.

Is it a call to communicate between various fields of art?

G.K.: This is unity. Whatever develops with time and depends on the imagination is unified. Different fields of art have one and the same basis – the difference is only in the materials. This is my attitude... It doesn't matter whether the film is popular science, educational, animation, acting or documentary. Imagine a sculptor who works with diverse materials. Division doesn't make sense if the work of art is viewed through a single prism and artistic form. It doesn't matter whether the main character of your film is an artist or not.

In my experience, I had to deal with all aspects of film direction. I created features, documentaries and animation. At the University my teacher was Misha Tumanishvili, who taught us how to direct drama. My other teachers were Sasha Mikeladze and Lily Ioseliani. It was a very good school. My merit is that I acquired everything they taught, and then continued my studies in Moscow. I wanted to become a student of Mikhail Romm, but when he learned about my previous school, he advised me to continue my studies in the field of documentary making. Thus I got in touch with real people and realized I had found what I needed.

When I was young I used to take pure documents and weave them into a

There is an artist and there is a model. **The model represented by the artist is what I call art.** The "struggle" of an artist with the model is a process that brings great pleasure

creative tissue. For example, in the film Long Song the main character is an old man. In the first part, everything is staged and the scenes are based on graphic resolution. Each step the main character took is staged. The first ten minutes of the film reflect an old man who cannot work and has lost his passions. Is his life over, are memories of the past his only comfort?

After this documentary-style introduction, it is almost a candid camera that steps in. A scene at table with neighbors reveals how the main character returns to life. This too is pure documentary. The scene contains the main theme of the film and the sense of life – human relationships and to "love one's neighbour", to quote the Gospel.

When I worked on The Village, I did not use any creative devices. Some of the actors and cast did not even know we were shooting. Others got so accustomed to us that they took no notice of the camera. However, the film does not give the impression of being a documentary. With its artistic form, the film passes to another dimension.

Currently there is a huge interest in documentary films. The reason for this is obvious – the Hollywood manner of creating images has become, to a large extent, one of calques and clichés, which is a sign of death. That's why documentary films prevail. I believe that every human being is a separate novel, no matter what his talents and environment are. If you remember, The Village ends with Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani's words, "The universe is made of three types – the eternal village, worldly life and human life", or the human being. In this sense, documentary films have an advantage. We have to find the correct way of opening human souls. My acting films focus on the inner world of the actor. I think a director should not impose on the actor. Whatever is necessary for the main character should be found in his personality. People have all kinds of characteristic features, so a director should create the right conditions for achieving what he wants from the actor.

How are human features revealed?
G.K.: In different ways. For example, I revealed the old woman's character without any effort in The Misfortune, while in certain cases some pressure is needed. When you work with an actor, you have to grasp his nature and observe his reactions. When you know the actor well, the perspective of the role depends entirely on you. The main thing for the director is to know exactly what he wants.

To what extent does the development of cinema depend on technical progress?
G.K.: Of course, technical progress is useful, but it has negative impacts as well. If it were not for the digital camera, I would be unable to shoot one-hundred-and-five-minute documentary films. When I first got hold of a "Betacam", I filmed for a minute and a half, the next day I filmed for five minutes, then for an hour and a half... But I was more of a cinematographer on the first day. Thus, there is no exact answer to this question.

One thing can be said with confidence, however. I remained at the outset of filmmaking, and am still not an amateur of colour, although for a long time I did not know the reason. There is an artist and there is a model. The model represented by the artist is what I call art. The "struggle" of an artist with the model is a process that brings great pleasure. The model penetrates into the artist's world, nervous system, tempo and rhythm... When an artist creates a portrait, the aim is not photography. A work of art should represent the author and his inner state. In certain Russian paintings the author is not present. This is because he failed to win in the "struggle" with the model. That's why they started disintegrating form, which led to modernism. When you observe Leonardo da Vinci's models, you speak to the great artist. The same refers to literature, with the exception of Gogol. Neither Don Quixote nor Hamlet was created in Russia. Whatever was created there is marvelous, but belongs to a different world. The Russians were unable to create an elevated world like Shakespeare's and Cervantes', free from matters of the earthly world.

Black-and-white film drives you far from nature. Eventually I realized that naturalism is what I hate about color. However, I have seen films where color is so blurred that it can't be felt.

When you see a nude masterpiece, it doesn't arouse any earthly passions, but as soon as you put it in a film frame, it becomes earthly. This is a shortcoming of cinema and why it cannot reach such dimensions of freedom as music and poetry can. A film may be a good work of prose, but it will never reach the level of poetry, though silent films are an exception.

Has technology affected filmmaking?
G.K.: Yes, and in this regard, technology is a step backwards. Of course, one should accept the fruits of progress, but essential things should not be lost and forgotten. I tell my students at the very first lecture that cinema is a visual art. Today you seem pretentious if you make the actors silent. But the visual side should not be lost, and everything should be subordinate to it. ●

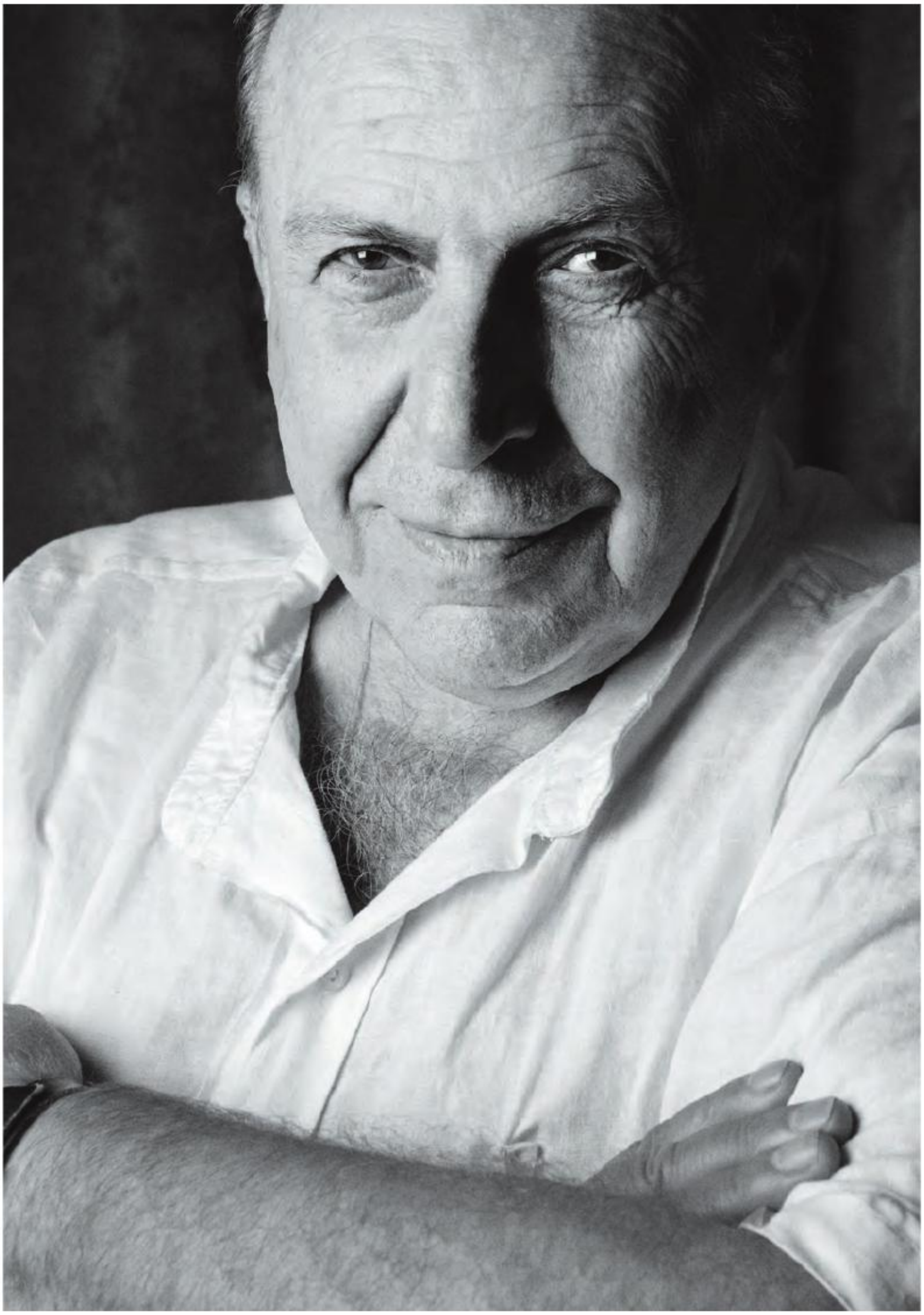
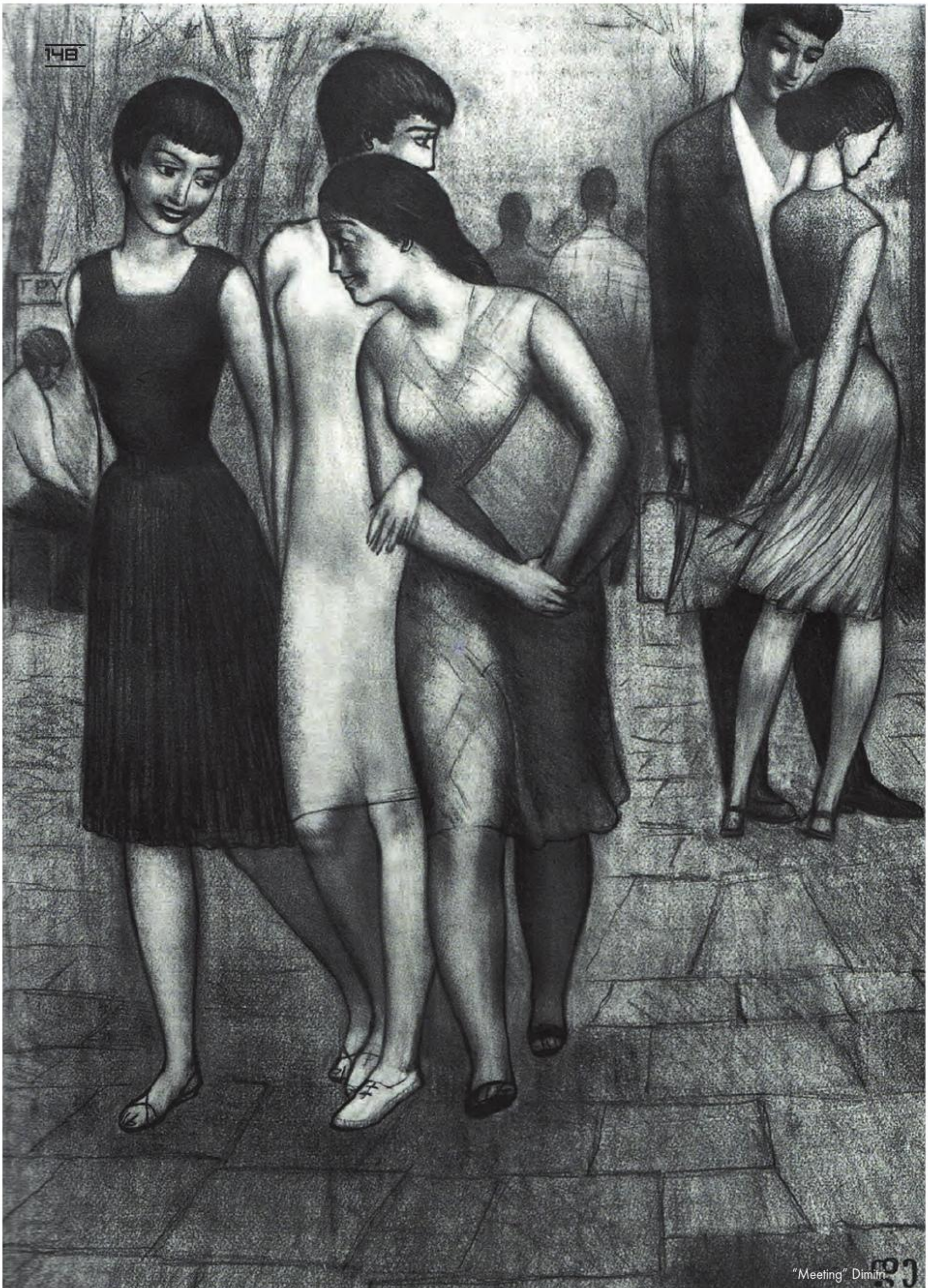


Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili



"Meeting" Dimitri Eristavi 1957

Profession – Art Director
Dimitri Eristavi's Creative Lab

>> Irina Demetradze

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Rene Claire said, "The film is ready, it only needs shooting." Hundreds of sketches created by Dimitri Eristavi already illustrated what will be filmed. Otar Iosseliani told him, "Even if I have a hangover and dizziness while shooting, your frames put everything in order…".

D.E.: Eldar Shengelaya organized a retrospective of Georgian films in Belgrade. My paintings were exhibited at that time in a famous Belgrade gallery. The interest towards Georgian culture, especially the films, was great. People asked, "How can such a small nation create such masterpieces?" During the retrospective Eldar was talking about Georgian history, culture and traditions when he was interrupted by Elem Klimov (Russian director, Chairman of the former USSR Union of Filmmakers) who said something amazing: "Eldar is deceiving you, but doing it well, because Georgians are the most talented people in the world." It was surprising to hear this comment from a Russian chauvinist like Klimov, author of famous films like Farewell to Matyora and Agony. The "nationalist" Klimov actively supported the idea of a greater Russia.

Georgian films created by the 60s generation were ideologically and stylistically different from other films made in the Soviet Union. Russian metaphysics was replaced by a "southern mentality" in Georgia, where the films reflected a flow of life rather than consciousness. The main thing was the vision of the generation of the 60s. There was a conceptual revival of art and literature that brought a new style, language and artistic technique.

D.E.: After Stalin's death we were freed from our handcuffs. The energy accumulated over years of totalitarianism exploded. Recently I read an old article by Merab Mamardashvili, where he said "Newspapers and all the media are distorting mirrors". Indeed we lived in a space distorted by mirrors and were so used to this twisted reflection that it seemed natural. In the 60s there was a flash of freedom and we felt we could breathe fresh air.

Why were the critics and the generation of the 60s so impressed by Iosseliani's Once Upon a Time There Was a Singing Blackbird? Forty years after the production of the film, Russian critics published reviews of this film again. Is it realistic to "live one's own life" in any country at any time? Only Gia Agladze who is a character in

this film manages this. So the subconscious optimism of people, including those who enjoyed this film, who were brought up in a totalitarian state is quite natural.

D.E.: I was also a co-author of the script. There are some other people mentioned in the credits, but this was done for bureaucratic reasons. Initially we made a Russian synopsis, and the film was called Day by Day. I had already cooperated with Otar on Giorgobistve. In general, I liked working on films. You may be surprised, but films were a way of relaxation for me. In a studio, a painter is alone with the palette. On the set, he works with the crew, travels and adjusts to new circumstances which gradually become familiar.

The idea of Once Upon a Time There Was a Singing Blackbird belongs to Otar, but we developed the idea together. A friend of mine, Malkhaz Datukishvili, was the prototype for Gia Agladze. He was very talented and could create everything with his hands, including tailored coats and suits. Gia Agladze also sews things in the film. Once we went to Otar Gordeli's wedding and Gia sang – he could sing pieces from Italian opera brilliantly. Professors from the State Conservatory admitted Malkhaz to the Department of Singing without taking any exams. However, in his second year, Malkhaz gave up studying, saying they were spoiling his voice. He learned Italian, was well-read and, in short, extremely talented in everything. Later he was arrested in Leningrad and sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment for a counterfeiting offense. The prosecutor said the money was made so well that they thought it was printed in the USA. On hearing these words, Malkhaz looked at the audience proudly. After leaving prison, he settled in Siberia and the lady in whose house they had made the counterfeit money went to live with him there. Later they returned to Georgia and have lived together ever since.

Dima says the film is "open-ended". I thought—and had read in many reviews – that the main character died. After hearing Dima's words, my attitude to life has become more optimistic.

D.E.: Unusual Exhibition is, to a certain extant, similar to Once Upon a Time There Was a Singing Blackbird, although Eldar and Otar are directors with totally different styles.

Eldar treated my "frames" more freely. Initially we filmed in Kutaisi. The main actors – Dodo Abashidze and Guram Lortkipanidze – were always invited to feasts there, as the people of Kutaisi are extremely hospitable. It was thus impossible to continue working. I advised the director to move the filming to Batumi. According to Rezo Gabriadze's script, the action takes place in Kutaisi, but in fact we shot half of the film in Batumi. And when we were there, Dodo Abashidze taught me how to swim.

As for me, I helped the directors to turn the literary text into images. I had made lots of sketches in advance while working with Eldar Shengelaya and Otar Iosseliani. Unfortunately, those sketches were later lost. Both of these directors "followed" my sketches. Rezo Chkheidze dealt with the frames himself and sometimes even ignored the advice of the director of photography. Seashore Path was my first work in cinema. I am not pleased with the result and I think Rezo also dislikes the film. Anyway, I am grateful to Rezo for bringing me to film-making.

Tenghiz Abuladze was also a marvelous person. We collaborated on Me, Grandma, Iliko and Ilarion. I remember Sesilia Takaishvili was always annoyed, saying there were no close-ups of her. Sandro Jorjoliani felt the same way. Tenghiz insisted that he appreciated them and cared about them. The film locations were in Manglisi. Every morning Tenghiz brought the actors caviar sandwiches. One day Sesilia said, in a bad mood, that she did not care for caviar...

It was a time when Italian neorealism was fashionable. Tenghiz also liked aesthetics. The village in the film seems barren in a neorealistic way. What I like most in this film is the winter, and not just because I joined the crew in winter and sketched those episodes.

Favorites of the Moon is Otar Iosseliani's masterpiece of the French period. This is a different Iosseliani – he is assimilated into French film traditions and inspired by the last films of Bunuel. Your style is different too. The image is more eclectic and like a collage, which makes the film very interesting.

D.E.: The entire film is like one continuous frame. There is an episode where the husband is walking in the street and his wife is at home being unfaithful. It took three days to shoot this episode, but in vain. I then had an idea – the husband walking in the street is angry and scares the pigeons. One pigeon lands on a window-sill. From the window, the camera moves into the room, showing the wife and her lover. This is one continuous view. The French press highly appreciated this device and other devices as well.

In another episode, older people plan an explosion. We had to think hard about what to explode. First we'd planned to explode the palace in Montmartre. Then we made a statue and blew it up. Only the feet remained after the blast – so it was more ironic.

French cinema was in crisis during that period; however Otar's film received the award for Best Direction at the festival in Venice. He almost got a Grand Prix, but one of the Jury members was Yevtushenko from Russia who strongly opposed this. Russians often denigrated us, for example I remember many spiteful and slandering reviews. Nevertheless, Georgian films continue to enchant audiences worldwide, while nobody remembers those critics and their bitter reviews. ●

Photo: Ineke Smits personal archive

REMEMBERING GIO TSINTSADZE
A CONVERSATION BETWEEN ZAZA RUSADZE AND INEKE SMITS

Let's talk about Gio. Strange, isn't it? Because… A long time has passed.
Ineke Smits: Since Gio passed away? June, July, August, September, October, November, December.

That's six months?... When did it happen?
Ineke Smits: Middle of June I think. It's awful when you forget dates, isn't it?

Dates don't mean much. Strangely enough, my mind has failed to register Gio's death. There are days when I think I should call him and ask how he is. Is he drinking? Is he working on something new? This feeling follows me everywhere. When I drive through Mosashvili Street, I realize he's no longer with us. He's not here—he's moved somewhere else.
Ineke Smits: It's a strange feeling for me too. We used to be friends and work together. Gio was involved in my films from the very beginning. He wasn't just a composer. We regularly chatted on Skype. If I hadn't heard from him for a while, I was worried. Then he left his "cave" again. On the right of the Skype window there is a list of people that you have communicated with over the last week, fortnight or three months, etc. I notice Gio's Skype nickname is gradually moving down. After his death I applied for some film funds and I realized I had to remove his name from the application. This was very painful. Realizing a person is no longer in this world is so painful! Realizing is not the right word – it all becomes real, comprehensible and concrete…

I understand how difficult it is for you. Gio was probably the first person you shared your ideas with. Remember I once told you that Gio as a person is "too much". The intensity of cooperation, dialogue, communication was never enough for him. He always wanted more, sometimes even more than was possible. I remember how happy he was when your film moved forward. There were two usual phases for Gio: in the first, he grumbled, saying he was too busy and things were not as ideal as he wanted. The next phase was idleness, either drinking or not drinking. He constantly moved between these two poles… Two days ago you and I talked about your new film. You said there would be no music in the film. When did you take this decision?
Ineke Smits: You know, it took me a long time to make this decision. My first film without Gio… It's hard to explain… He had composed a little whistling melody for the film. Several weeks ago I realized I had to think about it. I talked to

Mark, the sound engineer/designer who worked on our last film, The Aviatrix of Kazbek. He cooperated with Gio in Tbilisi and went to Amsterdam with him to do the final mix. I told Mark I didn't know who could replace Gio and had to find some solution. We talked a lot and both came to the idea of avoiding music altogether. This will be a film without music – there will only be the little whistling melody, but we don't know yet how we will use it. Frankly speaking, this decision calmed me and it seems this will be a monument to the memory of Gio, and a little pause for me to realize things. Time will show...

I think it's a good idea. A "sense of guilt" is not the phrase, but replacing Gio would be strange and would seem like a betrayal. I never worked with him, but I remember how nervous he was when he let me listen to his new compositions. He felt highly responsible and behaved almost childlike. Do you know what I appreciated in him most of all? He attached great importance to dialogue. He liked to discuss things to understand what he had to search for. He tried to penetrate into the depth and achieve the right state in the right place. We discussed things for hours. He always mentioned the temperature. He said a certain temperature was necessary to generate ideas. He suffered from the lack of such temperature, especially in our generation. He told me there had been a necessary way to discuss things in his generation, but it disappeared. I am grateful to Gio for sharing these memories with me. He idealized his youth, which was part of the Soviet epoch.

Ineke Smits: That's true, especially with regard to Perestroyka. The methods for recording music differed between the former Soviet space, Georgia and Holland. For instance, musicians in our country are paid on an hourly basis. Gio's experience was of long, intense work with the orchestra. In Holland musicians would come to the studio, play their instruments and leave. Gio suffered from this way of working, as it frustrated him. He couldn't understand what was going on and was unable to control things, which made him nervous. Besides, his English was poor at that time. Once he saw some writing on his scores and got very angry. There were conflicts, and the situation was hard for both of us. I had to smooth things over.

His friendship with Marten Van Hent started at that time. For Gio, Marten was a link between the two worlds. This is the story of my feature film Magonia. It was Gio's first international film, which brought him worldwide fame. We should also take into account the situation in the 90s—the Dighomi film studio was in ruins and there were no working conditions whatsoever. After our first joint project Gio said: "Let's record music the way I want. Let's do it in Georgia". We started recording in Dighomi. The studio was in a terrible state – lights went off and water

dripped from the ceiling. Nevertheless, we recorded music for Putin's Mama, Black Gold and Transit Dubai. In all, we cooperated on seven films – Nostalgia, Magonia, Putin's Mama, Black Gold Under Notecka Forest, Transit Dubai, The Aviatrix of Kazbek –six or seven? I've forgotten something…oh, yes, Rose, Violet and Lily, which was our first joint film, even before Nostalgia.

You as a director were very faithful to Gio. Magonia was his first international film and a way to cross the Georgian border. Gio never regretted his negative experiences abroad. After this film, he started using the computer; he used the keyboard to create midi files. However, at the end of the process the only way of recording music for Gio was live performance. My young colleagues that Gio cooperated with say he never managed to record a live orchestra and regretted this very much.
Unlike other composers from the older generation, he was always well-informed about contemporary processes and interested in modern technology. He always downloaded programs from the internet, which sometimes caused his computer to freeze. He was always open to new things. I remember we shared some pieces of music. Once I recorded Vladislav Deley's new album for him. Deley is a Finnish composer who creates electronic music. I'll always miss this sharing.
Ineke Smits: Talking about Gio, we should not forget his curiosity. He was interested in the new generation and eagerly cooperated with them. He hated winter in Tbilisi. He was often depressed in winter and tried to arrive in what he called the Resthome Northern Star meaning my place in Rotterdam. Every day he went for a walk and observed new buildings that had been built in his absence. He bought concert tickets and invited my mother. They were great friends, although she is nearly 80.

He went to museums and exhibitions. Gio was young – his hair was not even grey. This is because he was always curious. He often regretted that the level of culture, according to his standards, was going down. Yet he was non-elitist – he made friends with housekeepers and queens alike. But his curiosity was so important…

You want to call this an interview?

No. I hadn't planned our conversation as an interview. When they asked me to interview you, I thought it would be better if we just talked about Gio. It's just a conversation between two colleagues who have worked with Gio and appreciate his music. I think this was the right decision.
Ineke Smits: You're right. It's better this way. Let's call it a conversation about Gio. You need photos, don't you? I'll find them. Probably Gio wouldn't be pleased about this, but dear Gio, now we can talk about you openly… ●

Photo: Ineke Smits personal archive

"Life is sadness – the sweet sadness of being human" Goderdzi Chokheli

>> Teo Gabunia

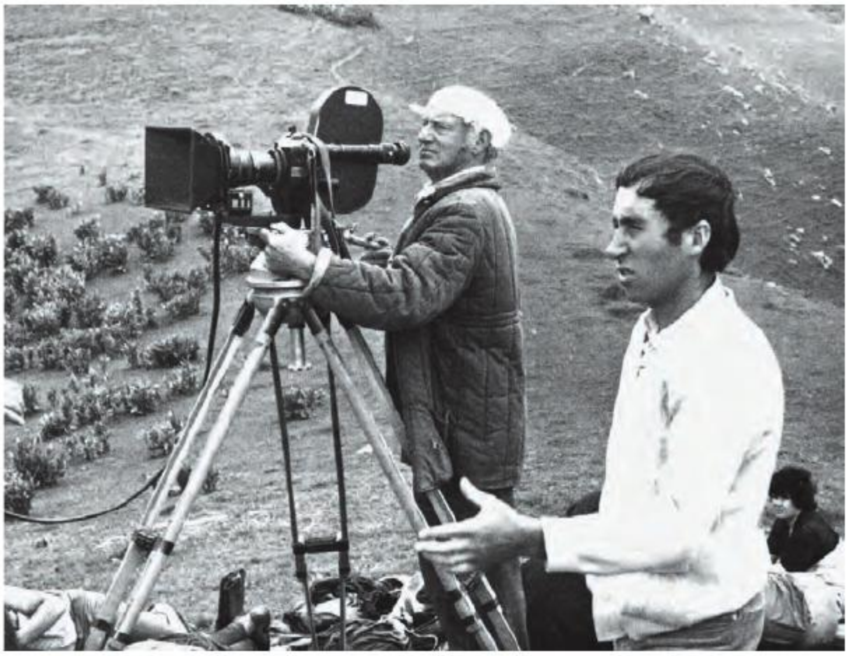
If we study the cinematographic history of Georgia, we see that in the early stages films fulfilled a more or less similar function – to portray the heroes of their time. Characters had to be ideal and to serve as good examples to the audience, in a concrete epoch and social environment.

Yet art cannot exist isolated from reality. The existing environment influences artistic processes. In the films of the generation of the 1980s reality was starkly reflected, and directors had to work under harsh conditions. They created new ideas, a more contemporary style and new heroes. These young directors are distinguished by a different vision, one that focused on the problems of their time, showing a reality that Georgians knew only too well, but which was new to Georgian films.

Among these young directors was Goderdzi Chokheli. The peculiarities of his films are sincerity, national character and traditions, especially the rituals of Georgian highlands. One of his main themes is the eternal link between man and nature. His films are filled with both sadness and a love of life – he views life both poetically and realistically, offering reflections on life, death, fate, old age and other timeless themes.

In Khevsuri from Bakurkhevi and The Spirit of the Place Chokheli uses a kind of literary arbitrariness and cinematographic reflection on nature. His films reflect an artistic refinement and interesting dramaturgy. He was one of the first directors to focus on the painful issues of the1980s in Georgia. Khevsuri from Bakurkhevi is based on an original script about a mountainous village where a young man plays with a gun. Gradually, as he gets used to his new "toy" he starts to train a "military unit" of women, sometimes "plays" with the gun, and finally decides to point the weapon at himself. As if playing a game, he points the gun at his heart. ... The author avoids

Photos from family archive



Goderdzi Chokheli
on the set

showing the shooting scene so the audience only hears the sound of a shot. This is the end of the young "fatalist's" game.

In this film Chokheli created the image of a young romantic character who lives in the highlands and is full of humor and a tragic spirit. The beautiful landscape of the mountains gradually turned into a field for the young man's game. The behavior of the young man would normally cause an audience to feel critical of what he did, but with Chokheli's sincerity and distinctive attitude towards human sadness, the audience sympathizes with the main character, and his behavior only brings a sad smile.

The main character of The Spirit of the Place is a village. This abandoned village in the mountains illustrates the eternal problem of life and death. There are only two inhabitants in the village – a man and a woman. The old man is blind and can hardly stand. During the entire film he sits on his balcony with his back to the camera. The woman is old but energetic – she looks after the cow, takes care of the house and cooks for the old man. In this terrible silence only these two persons enliven the village.

Then the old man dies, and the woman calmly makes a decision: she hangs up a rope to commit suicide. However, at that very moment a cow starts to bellow. This makes the woman change her mind and return to life. The audience sees the tragedy of the woman as a metaphor, with a close-up of the hanging noose, through which we see a view of the village…as if the village is destined to die.

The generation of the 80s attempted to start a dialogue with the audience and Goderdzi Chokheli is an outstanding representative of that generation. He believed in ideals, integrity and harmony. He discovered harmony in his native highlands, as he felt he was a natural and inalienable part of Georgian mountains. This integration is vivid in his films. Episodes and parts of these films are filled with independent artistic expression, although each of them is piece of a whole. ●

Photos from family archive

" SHORTS "

TBILISI, MY CITY

>> Irine Zhordania

Independent stories united in one film, diverse aesthetics, visions and subjects. All these stories are united around one theme—Tbilisi. The pulse of this city is felt and expressed differently in each film. Tbilisi, My City is a collection of twelve short films made by different directors. Eight are finished and the other four are now in the production process. This Georgian-American project is jointly implemented by the Iberia Pictures Studio (Georgia) and Storyman Production Company (USA). According to one of the producers, Keti Galdavadze, audiences will see the film at the end of this year.

Levan Tutberidze
C'est la vie

"That's life" is a famous phrase—is it true for your film?
L.T.: No, just the contrary. The main idea is that life is not what we think. Sometimes we think this is life, and it turns out to be a film. And in a film everything is a bit different anyway.

Like an episode from a film set?
L.T.: Maybe. I can't say the story is taken from my life, but there are certain influences from my film set. This is a story which I observe as a passer-by.

The key difference between a full-length and a short film...
L.T.: The main difference is in the speed, as we have to tell the story in a short time and that means quick thinking, although it does not complicate things – simply the mode of thinking is different.

You selected non-professional actors. Do you think a type of a character is more important than an actor's professionalism?
L.T.: I always pay attention to acting skills. Of course, it would be easier to invite professional actors, but in this film I thought the right type of person

Still from the Film
"Bullet Garden"

Photo: Levan Sikharulidze, Ivane Makharadze

Stills from the Films
"Freedom", "The guest"

was more important. The film slightly resembles a documentary. In general, although a film is a product of teamwork, individuals frequently condition its success, especially the director. Even if the crew consists of brilliant professionals, the director plays a decisive role, and he holds the main responsibility. When a director invites actors and takes the first steps, he has already become responsible for the film. And after production is over, the director has no right to justify himself for the shortcomings of the film.

Irakli Chkhikvadze
Bullet Garden

I.C.: When I read this story written by Sandro Kakulia, I remembered the events witnessed by our generation. We couldn't understand many things at that time, but we still bear the imprint of those days. The story is about the life of three youngsters between 1993 and 2011. We tried to express the emotional state of those years.

What was most difficult in this respect?

I.C.: Some events make a good story; others make a good film or poetry. We wanted to express the emotional state of that period without actions. The script describes the state rather than actions, and this creates the mood.

What tools did you use to express the mood?

I.C.: The story is called Bullet Garden, so the major tool is a machine-gun!!! That's it.

Alexandre Kviria
The Guest

A.K.: Several years ago I thought of making a documentary film about Tbilisi based on archival materials. When I heard about the project I remembered that idea. The first event that came to my mind was Fidel Castro's visit. I thought something like a phantasmagoria could be created based on his trip here, and then I learned there was a real love story related to Fidel Castro's visit to Tbilisi! It was an interesting coincidence.

A combination of feature and documentary?

A.K.: In a film it is possible to achieve that kind of combination. The boundaries between the genres have disappeared and I prefer documentaries to features. That's why I like the documentary style in feature films, and I thought that kind of style would be perfect for this film.

Was that the right decision?

A.K.: Time will show!

Nika Agiashvili
Malcolm, Ten Years Later, Freedom

N.A.: Among the three stories I created for this project, the most personal to me is Ten Years Later. I started thinking about this theme as soon as I was in-

Photo: Levan Sikharulidze, Ivane Makharadze

On the Set; Still from the Film "Malcolm"

volved in the project. The main character returns to Tbilisi after ten years abroad. It's autobiographical – I saw a different Tbilisi after those ten years of absence.

A totally different picture of the city is drawn in Freedom which is about freedom and open spaces. The name of the main character is also Freedom. The film is like a piece of poetry, completely based on emotion. Here we don't see the city through the eyes of the main characters, but we focus on their relations and adventures. We see how they come to the city and leave their trace.

In the third film Tbilisi is viewed through the eyes of a foreigner. At first the main character doesn't find anything interesting in Tbilisi, but eventually he finds himself instead. The role of the main character is performed by Malcolm McDowell, and the film is called Malcolm.

Is McDowell the prototype of the main character?
N.A.: No, he is totally different. The main character of the film is always displeased and complains all the time. This great actor is very friendly and likes to establish good relationships and share his experience with young people. He fell in love with Tbilisi and I think he even considers it his city.

Was it hard to involve him in the project?
N.A.: No, it wasn't hard. I had met him while working on my previous project The Green Room. This new project had already started, and I asked if he would participate. He liked the script and gladly agreed.

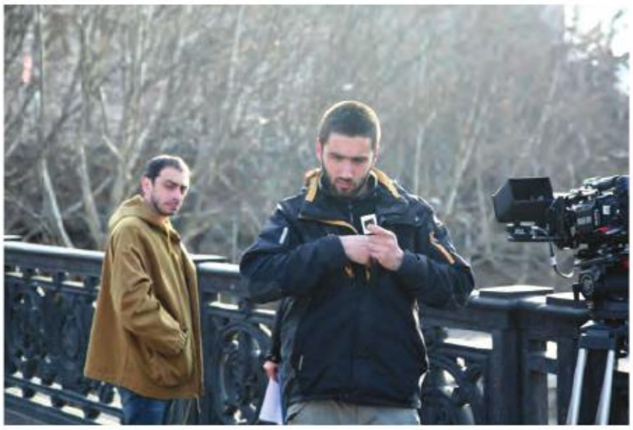
How did the filming go in Tbilisi?
N.A.: I am very pleased with the filming here. I made three stories and cooperated with lots of people. Before coming to Georgia I had heard there are all the resources necessary for making a film, and filming in Tbilisi confirmed this. The result was better than I had expected. I would like to work on a full length film with this crew, and hope to make a film about John Steinbeck's trip to Georgia.

Will the film be based on Russian Diaries?
N.A.: I will chiefly rely on that material though I think it won't be a purely biographical film. We want to offer the audience a contemporary version of the writer's travels in Georgia.

Tako Shavgulidze
Nelly

T.S.: I remember when our project producer Keti Galdavadze called me and said, "We intend to make a short film about Tbilisi, and maybe you would like to join us?"... My idea was to make a film about observation. Sometimes we want to study the features of a person we love or are interested in. We want to secretly observe his or her features, limbs, skin, shoulders etc. Our breathing changes and we become more sensitive and watchful. This is more than words or touching. When you observe someone, you forget about yourself. That's why there are two characters in the film – a boy (performed by Giorgi Giorganashvili) who is the object of observation, and a girl, Nelly, who is the observer. The spectators see the boy,

Photo: Levan Sikharulidze, Ivane Makharadze



"Wedding", "Nelly"
C'EST LA VIE"

but they only hear the girl's voice (Nutsa Tsikaridze).

The producers liked the script and told me I could participate in the project. The preparations took just a few days and the film is six minutes long. We needed only one location – a bridge. The art director, Salome Skhitrtladze, and I decided it would be the Galaktioni Bridge. The director of photography Giorgi Shvelidze, and his task was to observe the boy through the eyes of the girl – and he managed it perfectly.

Shooting lasted one day, the editing took three days, and the sound, four. Working on the sound was especially interesting for me. The sound director was Irakli Ivanishvili. Imagine that Nelly – i.e. the camera – had to breathe in the real sense of this word, and I think Irakli managed it very well.

Today there are not many people who like to observe – either in real life or in films. However, observation is a wonderful sensation, be it in Tbilisi or Tokyo. You feel you forget about yourself and destroy the barrier between you and the object of observation. You feel that you are one, and establish a link that will not allow cruelty, falsehood or hatred to penetrate into your soul or make you bored with life.

Levan Ghlont
Wedding

Henry Miller starts one of his stories with: "I am a patriot of Forty-fifth Street".. For me, my city is above all my street and neighbours. A city is made of people. The architecture, the inalienable part of any city, is also made by people. Unfortunately, our city is always involved in the process of destroying the old and building new. One of my friends even said there is no longer a place that will remind us of our childhood…

In my film there are no views of the city. The entire action takes place in a car. The story is both general and private. This could occur in any city where there is religious conflict. Tbilisi is considered to be multicultural and tolerant, although there are different sides to the story.

The account in the film is autobiographical, although it changed during the filming process. My wife was a Catholic and the Georgian Orthodox church refused to marry us unless she became Orthodox too. I was against this, as I thought it was an offense to my fiancee. We ended up getting married in a Catholic church.

I showed the unfinished film to composer Rezo Kiknadze. My wife also wanted to see the film, but I refused, saying I would show it to her after it was finished. She asked, "What if I am no longer alive by that time?" So I agreed to show her the film. ●

Photo: Levan Sikharulidze, Ivane Makharadze

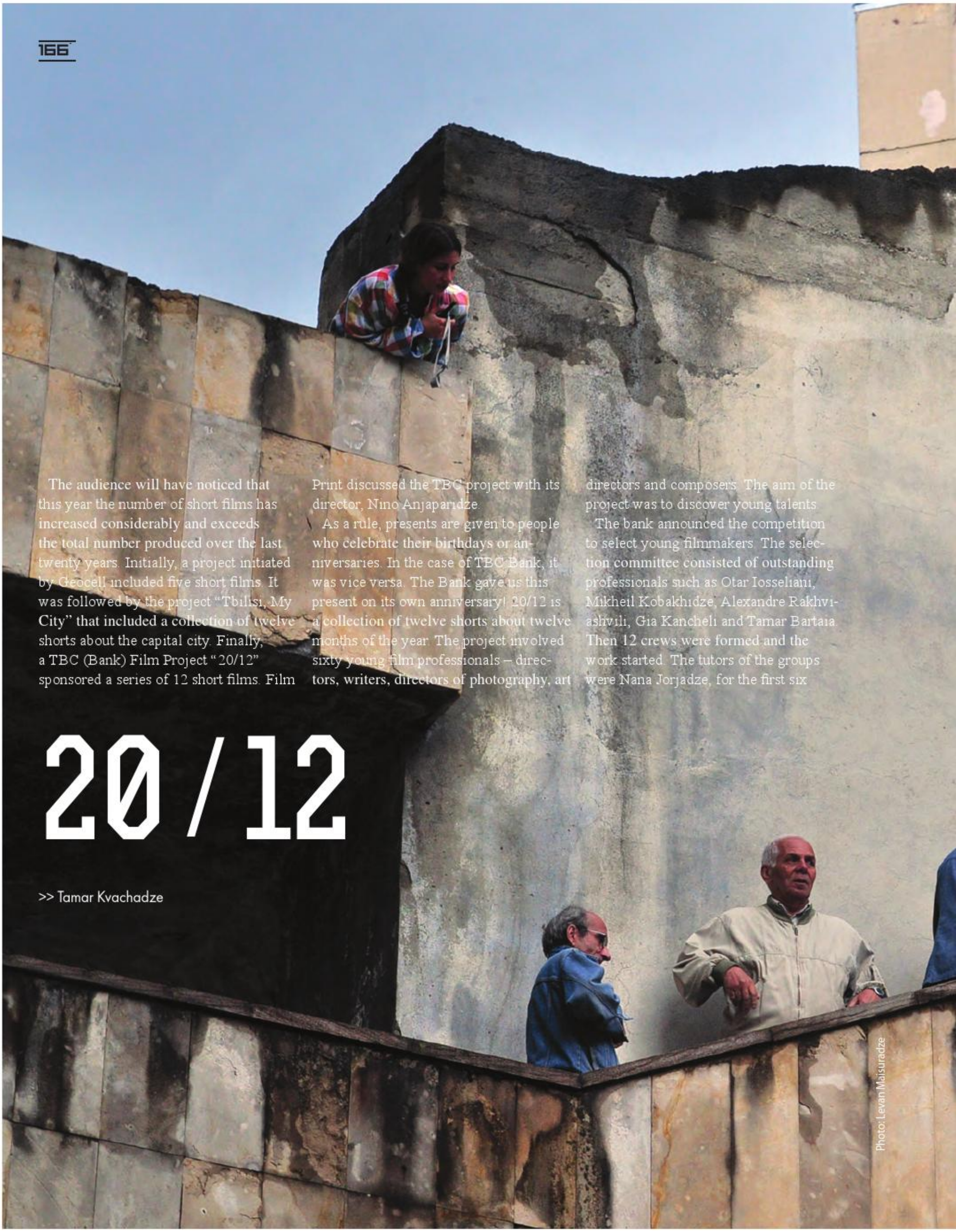


Photo: Levan Maisuradze

20/12

>> Tamar Kvachadze

The audience will have noticed that this year the number of short films has increased considerably and exceeds the total number produced over the last twenty years. Initially, a project initiated by Geocell included five short films. It was followed by the project "Tbilisi, My City" that included a collection of twelve shorts about the capital city. Finally, a TBC (Bank) Film Project "20/12" sponsored a series of 12 short films. Film Print discussed the TBC project with its director, Nino Anjaparidze.

As a rule, presents are given to people who celebrate their birthdays or anniversaries. In the case of TBC Bank, it was vice versa. The Bank gave us this present on its own anniversary! 20/12 is a collection of twelve shorts about twelve months of the year. The project involved sixty young film professionals – directors, writers, directors of photography, art directors and composers. The aim of the project was to discover young talents.

The bank announced the competition to select young filmmakers. The selection committee consisted of outstanding professionals such as Otar Iosseliani, Mikheil Kobakhidze, Alexandre Rakhviashvili, Gia Kancheli and Tamar Bartaia. Then 12 crews were formed and the work started. The tutors of the groups were Nana Jorjadze, for the first six

20 წელი
12 თვე

Photo: Levan Maisuradze

Photo: Levan Maisuradze

It's important to discover talented directors, scriptwriters, directors of photography, art directors and composers

films, and Nana Janelidze for the other six. The crews were film professionals, so for young directors the shooting was not only a creative process but also an educational one. This is very important, as students and young filmmakers frequently have only theoretical knowledge and don't acquire practical skills. Film production is a luxury for any country, and TBC Bank enabled so many young directors to shoot films and to show their talents and abilities. The bank took the risk of entrusting the anniversary project to inexperienced young directors, however, involving professionals in the crews was a kind of insurance.

The twelve short films will ultimately be united in one full-length one. They may not be masterpieces, but it's important to discover talented directors, scriptwriters, directors of photography, art directors and composers. After the crisis of the 1990s Georgian cinema is in the process of revival. It should continue its longstanding tradition and restore its significant role in the world of cinema.

The master classes offered within the project were also a luxury for film students. In Europe participation in master classes is competitive and costly. This project allowed these young professionals to attend master classes by Mikheil Kobakhidze, Alexandre Rekhviashvili, Gia Kancheli, Krzysztof Zanussi and Istvan Szabo.

After the premiere, the directors can send their separate films to festivals. Thus, the short films will also continue their lives independently. Personally I was very interested in discussing themes with the young directors. I wanted to find out their ideas, visions, their opinion about war, their evaluation of events and values like love, friendship... I am confident that audiences will also be interested in their visions of the world.

I think TBC Bank has proven that investing in young people is always fruitful. This project is successful in many regards. Many young people have gained experience, made their first creative steps, met their colleagues, communicated with professional filmmakers and attended master classes.

Audiences will be able to see the twelve short films on December 17, the day of the twentieth anniversary of TBC Bank. The lights will go off, the projector will come on, and the first titles will appear on the screen. Who knows, we may witness the birth of some great directors, scriptwriters, directors of photography, art directors and composers! ●

The Lilac Almanac "...And Then?!"

>> Mariam Kiasashvili

Last April the premiere of a joint project by Duta Production and Geocell, Lilac Almanac –w ...And Then?! was shown. It is a collection of independent short films by five young Georgian directors: The Open Windows of the City,...37, Metal, Barefoot and Babazi depict five different epochs from the 19th to the 21st century. The films focus less on the concrete epochs in which the story is developed and more on the spiritual and psychological state of a person growing up in the period concerned. The main characters either follow the rhythm of their epochs, or confront their times and are alien to their contemporaries.

The obligation towards the sponsor is fulfilled in the title. The films are completely free of product placement that is so frequent in contemporary Georgian films, and which annoys audiences. Nothing inhibits the spectator from enjoying the films of the Almanac. One just has to follow the subject line, observe the inner world of the characters and wait for the climax and denouement.... In brief, these are films and not commercial ads, and they last for a total of an hour and a half. The five shorts are a good example of independent films, and the director has no obligation to financiers, producers or consultants.

The Open Windows of the City
Tazo Narimanidze

This is the first film of the almanac, the story of a 19th century writer. It is a love story about a writer and his young maid. However, there is another main theme: every day the postman delivers anonymous cards to the writer. The dramaturgy of the film is based on the "relationship" between the sender and the recipient. It is a mystical drama in which the actor, Duta Skhritladze, moves between the real and the surreal.

Tazo: I was Dato Janelidze's student at the University of Theater and Cinema.

After graduation I worked on documentary films at Duta Production. Soon I wrote a script, and it was ready when the idea of the almanac appeared, yet it was not implemented for lack of financing. So I put the script aside, and when sponsors were found I reworked the script with new enthusiasm. I also write prose, but I prefer scripts. In my opinion, it is better when a director is also the script-writer – the work is easier, since whatever you write on paper becomes reflected in the film frames. During the shootings everyone was engaged doing their job. I concentrated on directing and did not to have to deal with lights or props. The most important thing was that young people cooperated with experienced professionals. Frequently crews don't follow a young director and they try to impose on him. In our case it was vice versa: everyone supported and assisted us. I think the experiment was successful.

The first film of the almanac gave the audience a feeling of the poetic spirit of the 19th century and left certain unanswered questions. The second film reflected the tragic events of 1937; the imprint of Communism and human protest on the regime were the focus of the third film and the fourth film reminded us of the situation in Georgia in the 90s. Finally, in the fifth film, the audience enjoyed the irony of Georgia's current way of life.

... 37 – Duta Skhirtladze

The drama takes place in 1937 and is the story of a Communist who makes lists of people sentenced to death. In the morning he cries "Tea!" in an angry voice and works on his lists again without any emotion... Lots of people should be killed, and by 11 p.m. an executioner

Stills from the Films "Metal", "37"

takes the lists and carries out the executions. The same happens the next day… and so on. In the final scene the rhetorical words usually uttered by the main character to the executioner are reversed, and refer to the Communist.

Duta: the entire action takes place in one room. Only after his mother's death, the main character leaves the room and his life is turned upside down overnight. The story is based on real events that occurred in the 90s.

The idea of the Lilac Almanac belongs to me. All the scripts had been written, so with minor changes we linked the stories and described the entire century. It is very important that young directors were given an opportunity to express themselves and reflect on various epochs as they see them. I, as a producer, did not make any changes. These are their first independent films after their diploma works, and I am proud to have implemented this project. I believe in the future of these young directors. For me too, this film was my debut – as a director – as I have no professional education in this sector of cinema.

Metal
Giorgi Kobalia

This story takes place in Georgia in the 70s. According to the director, it isn't a historical film, but the story of someone within the environment of the epoch. It's the story of a father who is divorced and has to stay away from his child. His father-in-law is the Director of a metallurgical factory, and he strives to serve the Communist regime, and even sings its praises. The wife of the main character is a typical child of the Soviet regime while the man is alien to his epoch but too weak to protest. He is depressed at his own weakness and finds himself in an even more miserable situation.

Giorgi: I was Rezo Esadze's student at the University of Theater and Cinema. I wrote the script a year before the shooting. The idea of my film is that a system can destroy the inner world of any person. I think the overall project is successful because it was not meant to be commercially profitable. Everyone knew that it would not bring any revenue, but we all worked hard. The music was composed by Zviad Bolkvadze, Levan Maisuradze and Robi Kukhianidze. Nodar Nosadze's contribution is extremely valuable. We call him the corrector of colour, editing director and the saviour of Georgian cinema. He united the entire project and we all served a common goal, which is why the film can be considered the success of the young directors.

It is a pity that no film critics attended the showing and no review of the film has been written. I remember one film critic severely criticized all current Georgian films. He more or less praised one film, but failed to pronounce the author's name correctly. Despite these incidents I would be happy to hear critical assessments of our film, both negative and positive ones.

Barefoot
Giga Baindurashvili

The story of the fourth film takes place in Georgia in the 1990s, with two intertwining subject lines. It's the story of youngsters affected by the political and social environment. Two friends need

Stills from the Film "37"

money and plan to steal a taxi. Most of the film takes place in the car. The taxi driver is a poor young man who has to go to the market in the evening to meet his mother who sells goods there.

Giga: I was Dato Janelidze's student too. I had written the script before the idea of the almanac appeared. However, I reworked it in cooperation with the script-writer Dato Pirtskhalava. We were lucky to have obtained financing for this project as young people today rarely have such an opportunity. One project at the most is implemented each year in which young directors have a chance to shoot films. I think university students should have the possibility to participate in films financed by GNFC, for example working as assistant director is an important experience. Sometimes film directors and directors of photography graduate from the university without ever having visited shooting sets.

The films of the Lilac Almanac can participate in festivals separately. Another almanac is planned in which our friend Vako Kirkitadze will join us. He is studying now at a University in New York. He will shoot his contribution in the USA and also assist us in the production. His film September was part of the project "Farewell to Arms" and short-listed for Youth Oscars. It was the opening film at the 12th Film Festival in Wiesbaden.

Babazi
Iva Pezuashvili

The fifth film of the almanac—Babazi – is based on a story by Iva Pezuashvili who is the director and script-writer of the film. Alchu won the competition "Autumn Legends" which was a joint project of Tbilisi State University and Geocell. Ten participants had eight hours to write a story on the theme – "The Butterfly Effect".

This comic film is about a boy who has an obsession about hedgehogs and remembers hedgehogs painted on a dinner-set in his childhood. Babazi was born in the wrong epoch – he cannot adjust to the life and kinds of entertainment of Tbilisi youngsters, and lives in his own world. However, the environment imposes its rules and Babazi is involved in a strange adventure. The film is based on the irony in which we live and create and in the long run we fall victim to.

Iva: I studied film direction and wrote stories too. After one of my stories won a competition, I continued writing actively.

Working on the almanac was very interesting. Babazi's director of photography was Irakli Akhalkatsi, and the art director was Shotiko Begalishvili. It was a useful experience. Kakha Kintsurashvili understood me without words; he saw and created Babazi's portrait very precisely. I think the audience understood what we wanted to say. Lilac almanac "... And Then?!" was our debut. The "First Film Barrier" has been overcome, so I think it will be easier to make films in the future, because when you bring a script to a producer, he asks "What have you done so far?" So this film is a kind of business card for us. The experience we have gained also makes things easier, and we hope to obtain financing for the next almanac. We have already chosen the theme, and script-writing is under way. The films will each focus on a particular social issue which is pressing and painful. We think this will ensure a broader audience and hope to be more successful, as we have already gained significant experience in filmmaking. ●

SPECIAL FOCUS

The Nature of Mixed Feelings

>> Irine Zhordania

A Clockwork Orange, O Lucky Man!, If, and Caligula are classic films in which Malcolm McDowell created unforgettable images – images that were often controversial because of their versatility. At the end of May, the famous actor visited Tbilisi. "Tbilisi, My City" is the title of a Georgian-American project currently under way. In autumn 2012 audiences will see the thirteen stories united in one film.

What did you know about Georgia before arriving in this country and what are your impressions now?
M.M.: I didn't know much about your country. I only knew it was part of the Soviet Union. It seems that after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Georgia was neither in the cultural nor the social-political orbit of the West. At least, in my environment nobody knew anything about Georgia. Now I can say confidently it's a uniquely wonderful country.

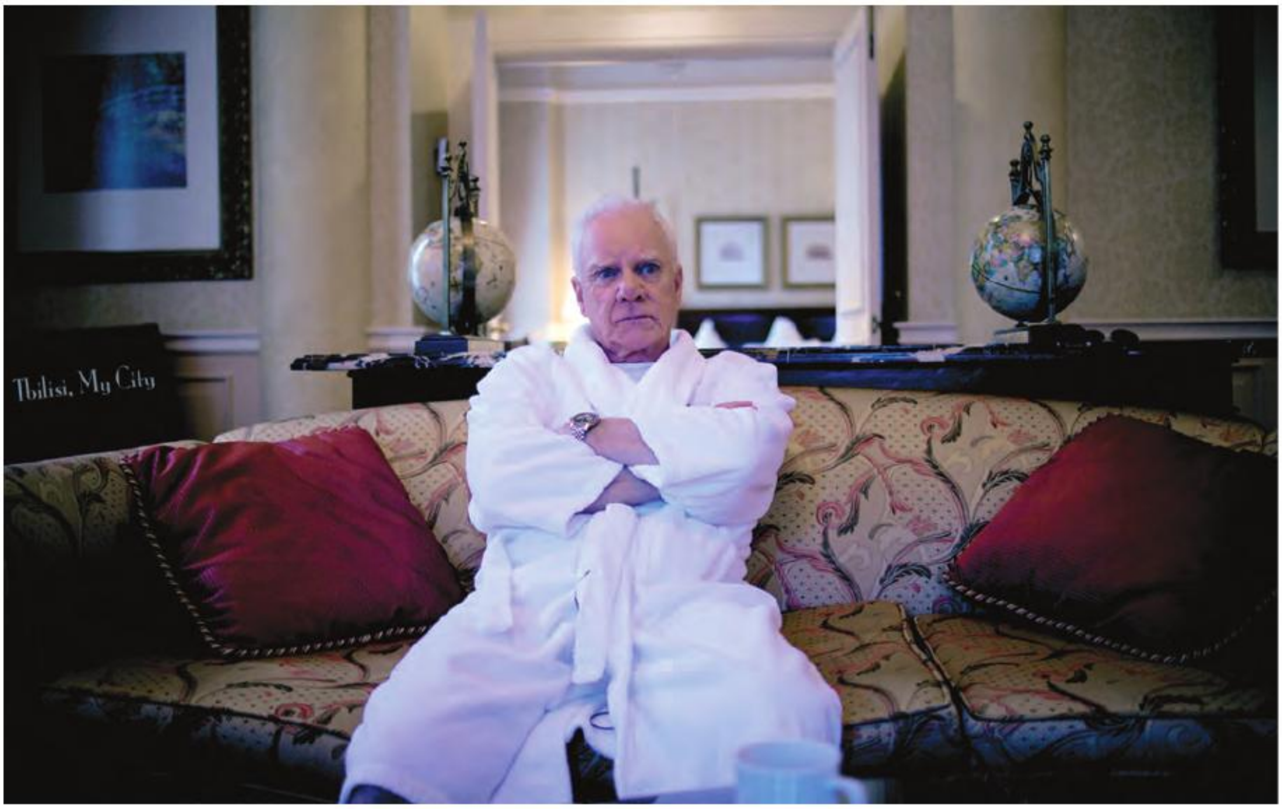
I first met film director Nika Agiashvili while he was working on The Green Room. He told me about Tbilisi and invited me to come to Georgia. I thought: "Why not?!" and am happy to have agreed. We can make a good film here, with a small budget. Shooting such a story at The Green Room would cost much more in other cities like London, Rome etc. The crew is made up of talented and hard-working professionals and I'd recommend every one of them. Georgia is a wonderful country with hospitable and optimistic people and Tbilisi is a marvelous city.

What about your character? What has he found in this city?
M.M.: I play a man who arrives in Tbilisi on business. He is tired of everything, but having spent an evening with Georgians, he discovers something new. He realizes that his life is dull and senseless and that life is worth nothing if we don't share our feelings with others.

You have performed unforgettable roles in films that are already considered classic– films by Stanley Kubrik and Lindsay Anderson...
M.M.: A Clockwork Orange is an eternal film – such a film will never die. The context may change and a work of art may acquire a meaning which was not planned initially. This is frequent with classic creations, and eternal works of art go on living. I'm happy to have met Lindsay Anderson at the beginning of my career. He is a great master who has created classic films. Out of my recent roles I would mention Karen Shakhnazarov's Murderer of the King. It was very interesting to work on this film and I advise everyone to see it.

When you work on a role, be it Caligula, Alex from A Clockwork Orange or some other character, how do you grasp his character – do you rely on logic or follow the emotional line?
M.M.: I can't give a definite answer to this question. With experience, a certain technique develops. However, the main thing is what comes from the inner self. An actor plays with emotion and doesn't just base his work on technique. For example, a scene in which you are holding a weapon. Who cares how you hold it? Nobody. This is mechanical. I'm more interested in the psychology of my character, the line between the actor and the character. There are no plain and simple people. Sometimes we say one thing and think another. Nobody is completely earnest or confident. This is what motivates

Photo: Levan Sikharulidze



an actor – the nature of mixed feelings. It is interesting to perform a character whose essence can't be grasped easily and completely.

In search of new adventures, I will soon travel to Scotland to play the role of a serial murderer. The film is based on real events that took place in the 50s. The real murderer, who has committed a series of crimes, is still in prison, and they invited me to get acquainted with him. I think he was disappointed when I refused to meet him. I don't want to bring fame to this person or to visit him in prison. I don't want to be influenced by him in any way. I want to understand his character with my own imagination. This is an artistic image and not a documentary film.

What is the key to an actor's success? Is it talent, hard work or luck?
M.M.: Probably it's talent and luck.

Is there any literary or film character which is especially close to you?
M.M.: I can't remember any. I enjoy reading Kafka and Hemingway, Graham Green and Jack London, but I can't say I see myself in any of the heroes. I can't remember any such characters in films either. As for the roles I have performed, in order to persuade the audience, you have to find yourself and put yourself in a character. The more you feel, the more confident you are. Otherwise, all emotions will be false.

What are your dream roles?
M.M.: I have always dreamed of a long-lasting acting career. My hero is John Gielgud. In my opinion, he is the best actor of all times. His career was unbelievably long-– from the 1920s to the1990s. I would be happy to have such a long career! It is interesting when your roles change with age. This is real happiness for an actor.

Can you remember the most beautiful woman you ever met?
M.M.: I was at a festival in Cannes. I entered a lift. The door closed and the lift went up. A young girl was standing beside me. I caught my breath. She was so beautiful! When I asked who she was, they told me it was Jacqueline Bisset. In Cannes I represented O Lucky Man! While Jacqueline represented Truffaut's La Nuit Américaine. When I told her this story thirty years later, she said she did not remember our meeting at all... ●

Photo: Levan Sikharulidze

First of All, I Invent a Fairy-Tale...

>> Ketevan Trapaidze

Lithuanian director, Vitautas Landsbergis has connections to Georgia like his father does, who was President of Lithuania, Vitas Landsbergis. When he was President he supported Georgia in the international sphere after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Vitautas, his son, graduated from the Georgian University of Theater and Cinema in the 1990s, in the Department of Film Direction, under Merab Kokochashvili. Vitautas Landsbergis frequently visits Georgia.

I know you have diverse interests – you write literature, fairytales and plays. What does cinema mean to you?
V.L.: Above all, I'm a philologist. That is my first profession. I am a specialist of Lithuanian language and literature. Later, when I studied film direction in Tbilisi I realized it was both good and bad to be a philologist, as for a true artist, thinking should be based on emotions rather than words. When I make a film, be it a feature or a documentary, I first invent a fairy-tale about how someone should live in order to achieve happiness. In films, like in real life, anti-fairy-tales are widespread. Around us there is dirt, evil, hatred and violence...It may sound naïve, but it is my wish to show the Lithuanian audience a totally different world – one they cannot find in newspapers, in the street or on TV.

The films of Georgian directors are also based on this kind of aesthetics and especially those by Otar Iosseliani, Eldar Shengelaya and my teacher, Merab Kokochashvili. Currently I cooperate in theater and cinema with Gela Kandelaki. He also says it again and again: "Why should we focus on filth and cruelty?"... Art should reveal the invisible sides of the human spirit...

For my documentary films I try to find characters with the best human traits. These are our ancestors distinguished by honor and wisdom. Therefore, I make documentaries about monks, painters, etc... No elaboration is necessary—and in my opinion, such people have different genes, different from most people. I think the audience should see such people as frequently as possible, because humankind is becoming more and more pragmatic. When a spectator watches such films, he subconsciously believes that once he was such a person too, and the flow of life made him lose these qualities. This is a kind of awakening, which is the main thing for me – not only with regard to art, but also in life. Film production helps me achieve this.

How did you come to films and how did your film career develop? As I know, your films were totally different in the beginning. How do you implement your ideas?
V.L.: Being a philologist, I am well aware of literature. Lithuanian literature is rich, both the classical and contemporary. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same about Lithuanian films. Lithuanians studied filmmaking in other countries. My first films were based on Lithuanian literature. At the beginning of my career I tried to transfer poetry to film. In fact, my first steps in film production were related to poetry. I tried to imprint my associative vision of poetry in a film. I addressed Lithuanian avant-garde poetry, the authors of which were united in a kind of clandestine dissident circle. Gradually I developed as a person and as a director. I re-evaluated my vision, and my taste became more refined.... Georgia influenced me to a great extent as it filled me with a sense of some inexplicable mystery. In Georgia, every fact, event and story is tragic and comic at the same time.

In general, I think a work of art should ask a question and yet we shouldn't give an answer. Let the audience think what life is and how it can be changed for the better... You may smile, but I have to say that Lithuanian folklore is similar to Megrelian... It is metaphysical and very sad... True romanticism is always accompanied by pain... Yet I believe also that theater, cinema and art in general should bring joy to people! Art should make people forget about daily routines and problems and bring a sense of relief... Humor is of vital importance for all of us. All this is abundant in Georgian films. Besides, the humor in Georgian films is not rude; it's built on refined, tender nuance. I would say such humor is "aristocratic".

For me, a sense of humor is a sign of intelligence. Many jokes and phrases have entered folklore and everyday speech from films. These phrases are familiar not only to Georgians but to those of other countries that were occupied by Russia during the Soviet period. Even today Georgian films teach us how to speak indirectly and make hints. Unfortunately, most contemporary films are deeply influenced by the direct American style and aimed at commercial success. Art seeks to educate the audience, but contemporary art is subject to the demand of spectators with poor taste. In old Georgian films it was the opposite, and therefore I still learn a lot from them.

With time, things changed in our film industry too. Numerous problems have arisen, although certain developments have been obvious recently.
V.L: I know. I have collected old films and show them to my students. They understand things better. They try to avoid clichés and to perceive plain and comprehensible film language. This perception leads to a sense of being on the edge between comic and tragic. You feel pain, sadness and melancholy, and at the same time all this is intermingled with

tact, cheerfulness and humor. People should be able to laugh at themselves and films should support this. This makes a nation stronger. One should not denigrate others, as that means you are weak.

You mentioned commercialization. This is a global phenomenon. Have you noticed other tendencies in our countries – Georgia and Lithuania?

V.L.: We are citizens of poor countries and we can't afford commercial films. Filmmakers in our countries have to make films for 100,000 Euros or – in an ideal case—200,000 Euros. My first feature film When I was a Partisan was made in ten days. Its budget was 80,000 Euros. We work in a different reality. Frankly speaking, this has its positive sides. We create things in extreme situations and have neither time nor money to focus on nuance. I think the main aim of art is to perceive oneself. You should be glad that God decided to use you to say something to people. You should admit your errors and learn from your mistakes. I am not against commercial films, and I even want to try my abilities in this field. Currently I'm working on a script that tells about the tragic epoch in Lithuanian history when the so-called "Forest Brothers" struggled against the Soviet occupation in the 1940-50s. We hope to get European financing and in cooperation with Georgians I want to create a Hollywood "Western type" of film. But even if I make a commercial film, my main aim will be to test my abilities rather than make a profit. However, it is impossible to carry out such a project without European financing. I hope the idea will be interesting for Europeans as they don't know Russia as well as we. The script should have a well-structured detective intrigue like in Andrzej Waida's film about the famous Katin tragedy. One of the main characters in my documentary film speaks very cleverly about commerce. He's a famous Lithuanian writer, of Jewish origin – Grigory Stanovich. I asked him about the reasons for the dramatic fate of his fellow-countrymen and he answered: "Satan pays you immediately – and in cash, whereas God demands that you pay!"

Probably this is our debt to God. However, a certain degree of commercialism is present in all fields of performing arts. We shouldn't be selfish and create films only for ourselves. Theater and cinema are dead without audiences. We as artists should tell all kinds of spectators something important to them about why the film was made. I like one British example: A doctoral student at a British university had to present his research to school children before he could get his academic degree, and receiving the degree depended on the student's ability to share his ideas with this audience! I think the same refers to art – you should not talk to the audience in a language that is comprehensible only to you...

You have mentioned children. Have you ever thought about making a film for children? This is a great responsibility, and delicate.

V.L.: My first film was based on the Brothers Grimm's "Hansel and Gretel". It was slightly surrealistic. I tried to show the inimical environment in which our naïve and innocent children have to exist. Evil does not necessarily have the face of a witch. The threat is real. For instance, the situation in Lithuania – pedophilia, under-age prostitution and violence are widespread. This was the beginning of my way in film production.

I also want to recall my student years. Our group in Tbilisi in the late 1980s was unable to graduate from the University. Instead of five years, we studied for only three and a half, so we could only learn the direction of photography and documentary filmmaking. We also attended lectures in film dramaturgy. When the time came to make our first short films, the situation in Georgia had become complicated and tense, and war broke out. Nobody could be responsible for our safety, so the authorities asked us to return to Lithuania and come back to continue our studies after the conflict was over. However, we only returned to Georgia after 21 years – in 2011! Some of us received their director's diplomas last year! We smiled as our fellow-students assessed our diploma work. Now they are professors at the University of Theater and Cinema... Thus, we were unable to study what we wanted.

Documentary film production is well-developed in Lithuania. We came to Tbilisi to study the specifics of feature films, but we managed to study only the theory. I see myself as a self-taught director. I've learned practical things in the process of filming. So I have only made two feature films, and am mainly involved in documentary filmmaking.

Folklore plays an important role in your films...

V.L: I am above all a citizen. Therefore, I am interested in the folklore and history, past and present of my country. Naturally, I think a lot about the future! Whenever I do something I want it to be interesting and comprehensible for youth. Our nations have both been affected by the Russian occupation. Works of art should be created by people who have healed these wounds, perceived the history of their nation and forgiven the invader. Only such people can preach love... I wanted to tell the coming generations that we are a strong, wise, proud and honorable nation. In order to bring this to the audience, I created documentaries about real persons who are distinguished for these qualities.

One such person is a Lithuanian basketball legend of the 20th century, Arvidas Sabonis. He was the leader of the team "Jalgiris" that became champion of the USSR three times. Of course this man was physically strong, but his moral strength made him a hero. He defeated his rivals due to his personal qualities. I have also made three films about Lithuanian partisans, the so-called "Forest Brothers". Only a few of them are still alive. While making these films I don't focus only on the purely artistic side. Above all, I am driven by the instinct of civic responsibility. I think we should follow the example of the Jews who have created numerous

films about the Nazi genocide. In this regard, our authorities are nearsighted.

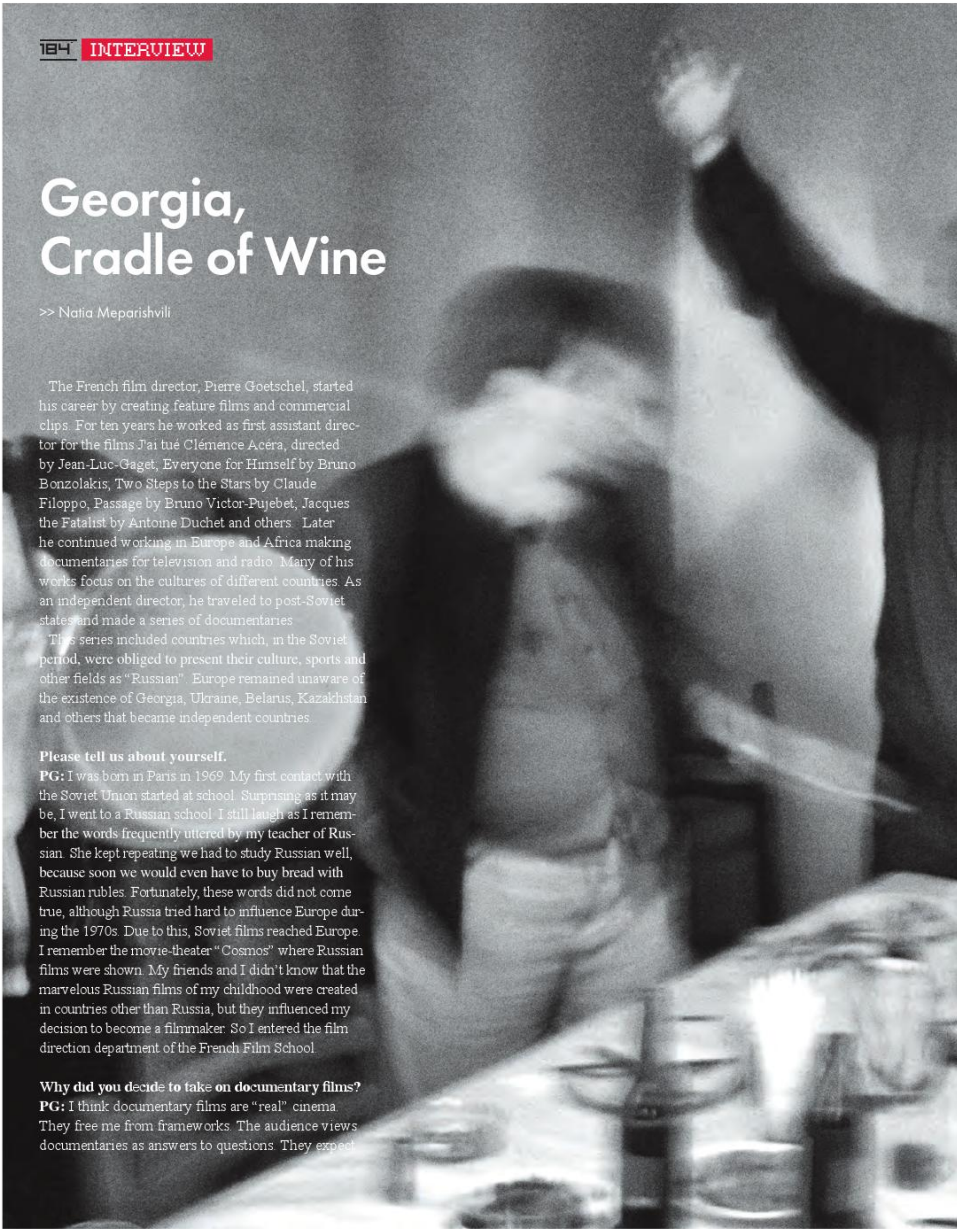
Therefore, I focus on the images and memories of the "Forest Brothers". The films dedicated to this issue will serve as archives... When I have finished this I'll allow myself to worry about the artistic side of film production and make whatever films I want, if only I live to that time! (he laughs).

Do you choose the format and style based on the concrete theme?

V.L: Frankly speaking, I don't think about it! I find what works best during the process. My films can be divided into three categories: first is my favorite—the documentary portrait, the second is the historical genre and the third is the metaphysical film where I carry out my search in a purely artistic direction.

I would like to thank you for what you do. It would be wonderful if coming to Georgia and showing your films becomes a tradition...

V.L.: I have some far-reaching plans: I want Lithuania and Georgia to carry out joint projects in theater and cinema. We have much in common, including our tragic history. We are both people of high moral values, wisdom and honor. In general, Northerners are considered to be cold-blooded, however Lithuanians are frank and tender-spirited. They are friendly and like to share their feelings with others. Georgians are also like that. So we will easily understand each other. I may be exaggerating, but it seems the world is becoming dull. States, nations and art are losing individuality and originality. In this situation small nations like ours should take care of each other, so that we do not disappear from the map—or else only something like a reservation can save us! ●



Georgia, Cradle of Wine

>> Natia Meparishvili

The French film director, Pierre Goetschel, started his career by creating feature films and commercial clips. For ten years he worked as first assistant director for the films J'ai tué Clémence Acéra, directed by Jean-Luc-Gaget; Everyone for Himself by Bruno Bonzolakis; Two Steps to the Stars by Claude Filoppo, Passage by Bruno Victor-Pujebet; Jacques the Fatalist by Antoine Duchet and others. Later he continued working in Europe and Africa making documentaries for television and radio. Many of his works focus on the cultures of different countries. As an independent director, he traveled to post-Soviet states and made a series of documentaries.

This series included countries which, in the Soviet period, were obliged to present their culture, sports and other fields as "Russian". Europe remained unaware of the existence of Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan and others that became independent countries.

Please tell us about yourself.

PG: I was born in Paris in 1969. My first contact with the Soviet Union started at school. Surprising as it may be, I went to a Russian school. I still laugh as I remember the words frequently uttered by my teacher of Russian. She kept repeating we had to study Russian well, because soon we would even have to buy bread with Russian rubles. Fortunately, these words did not come true, although Russia tried hard to influence Europe during the 1970s. Due to this, Soviet films reached Europe. I remember the movie-theater "Cosmos" where Russian films were shown. My friends and I didn't know that the marvelous Russian films of my childhood were created in countries other than Russia, but they influenced my decision to become a filmmaker. So I entered the film direction department of the French Film School.

Why did you decide to take on documentary films?

PG: I think documentary films are "real" cinema. They free me from frameworks. The audience views documentaries as answers to questions. They expect

a journalist or a reporter to appear on the screen, and can't grasp the director's idea to reflect real life unadorned. A documentary film is a fragile kind of aesthetics.

What can you say about Georgian films?

PG: I know Georgian films well, and can say confidently that I became a filmmaker thanks to Georgian directors. I have always pointed this out and I will go on repeating it. Georgian films are close to European cinema in their aesthetics, rhythm, depth and vision; they are much closer to Europe than American films are. When you see a Georgian film you want to see other films by the director. I think other foreign directors will agree that Georgian films are refined and tasteful.

Unfortunately, when I first watched the films of great masters like Parajanov, Otar Iosseliani, Eldar Shengelaya, Pelikyan and others, they were presented as Soviet. We had no opportunity to learn more about the motherland of these directors, and we didn't know they represented different cultures and nations. As for contemporary Georgian films, I'm glad filmmaking is much simpler in Georgia than in any other European country, including France. This is necessary for the further development of the Georgian film industry.

You made a series of documentaries about post-Soviet states. Was this due to the lack of information on these countries in the past?

PG: Certainly, this motivated me, but let me explain why I decided to make these documentaries. I had already made short documentaries for the French cultural channel, France Culture, and had started preparation for this project. This was a favorable period for creating documentary films, as the Soviet Union had disintegrated and there were waves of revolutions in the post-Soviet states that aroused interest worldwide. My expectations were met – everyone was interested in the fate of the countries hidden beyond the Soviet iron curtain.

The first documentary film was about Ukraine – its history, culture, music and population. The Orange Revolution had just happened and this influenced the rhythm of life in the country. I met folk musicians and many others. After Ukraine, I made films about Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. Shooting these documentaries took two years, which was a period of hard work and interesting discoveries.

When did you visit Georgia?

PG: I first came in 1996. It was a short visit, although very fruitful and busy. I told myself I would return to study its ancient culture more thoroughly. I'm grateful to my friend Irma Inaridze who took me around to all the regions of Georgia, and introduced me to the national culture and art. Without her I wouldn't have implemented this project.

You made a film about the most vulnerable subject, yet a favourite Georgian theme – wine – and you have called it Georgia, Cradle of Wine. Tell us a little about the film.

PG: The film was financed by Arte, which is the best channel for enthusiasts of documentary films. Before that, France had not made any films about Georgia. Initially, when I suggested to Arte and other channels to finance a film about Georgia, they refused. The absence of funding complicated things, but despite this, we started to search for locations. The shootings chiefly took place in Kakheti. My friend – a photographer of a popular magazine called Geo –came to Georgia and helped us in the preparatory process. We continued to offer the project to various French channels, but in vain.

We had already started shooting the film when the Russian-Georgian war broke out in August 2008, so then some channels became interested in Georgia. Arte got in touch with me, and in 2008 we finished the documentary. The world got to know this small country with its rich and ancient culture. Unfortunately, a certain bias is necessary to attract the attention of an audience. Irma Inaridze and I are authors of the film, and the director of photography is France Rousse.

How do you evaluate post-revolutionary Georgia?

PG: Georgia is very unique in every way. Revolutions took place in nearly all post-Soviet countries, but Georgia was an exception. It changed for the better in a very short time—especially its culture and economy.

How did audiences receive this film about Georgia?

PG: Georgia, Cradle of Wine tells about independent Georgia, its recent history and culture. The main theme is wine. Having seen the film, the audiences wondered why the Kremlin established an embargo on the very product that is a kind of business-card of the country. Initially the film was not planned for festivals, however some festivals got in touch with me after the film was broadcast by Arte. In 2009 it was awarded the main prize at the Grand Prix Festival. It participated in other festivals as well: Wine Country Film Festival (California, USA), Festival de Cinema Douarnenez, Caucasus Film Festival (France), BIAFF Batumi International Film festival and others…Currently the world is interested in the theme of wine, which is related to Georgia's culture, history, economy and other issues.

What can you say about the Georgian film industry?

PG: I plan to shoot a feature film in Georgia and revive one real, but forgotten, story. It's surprising that this story has not served as the basis for a film yet. I can't say much about the film so far, but it's a historical drama and the story takes place in the mountains of the Caucasus. About the film industry here, I'm amazed at the country's dynamic development, which is evident also in the field of culture. In Georgia it is much easier to shoot a film than in any European country. ●

Pierre Goetschel and
Irma Inaridze; on the set
of "Cradle of Wine"

Bela Tarr – in Search of a Cinematographic Language

>> Irine Zhordania

I have been making films for 34 years. At a certain moment one feels he has to stop. After Turin Horse there is nothing else I can say. When you feel you have said everything, you should quit.
Dispair – A Method of Thinking – or the Nonsense of Existence...
What do you feel when you leave a movie-theater? Do you feel stronger or weaker? If you begin to think you should change something, if the film makes you stronger and fills you with faith, if a work of art fills you with a sensation of freedom, if it brings emotions – you've found an answer to your question. Scenes in a film are simple. The same things happen again and again as life goes by. This is our reality. And if one wishes to create, make changes, resist the flow of life, I consider I have reached my goal.

Unattainable Happiness

The definition of happiness is a question in itself. Happiness is a state. A person's happiness depends on the person. If you are ready to be happy, you will be. It is not a material object one can retain. It is temporary, like life. It is the same in Turin Horse, where everything disappears. If you can realize how somebody else's life goes by, you will better understand your own. Let's not blame these people for their miserable happiness. It's not their fault – their life is defined by the existing reality.
In Search of Cinematographic Language
The current political situation in Hungary

is unfavourable for filmmaking. Hardly a film has been financed in the last two years. Our production company had already closed when the Cannes Festival showed a film by Gyorgy Palfi, which was produced by our company. We then switched to international projects, and a film school will open in Sarajevo next year. This is our most important current project.
I think "teaching" is the wrong word with regard to films – it is impossible to teach filmmaking. One should learn it himself, and it depends on one's sensitivity. One should find his original language and way of communicating. Cinema is a kind of relationship, a means of expression. The main thing is to be free in self-expression. A teacher or mentor can only direct you and make you self-confident so that you follow your inner voice and express your concerns without looking right or left.
I was sixteen when I first held a camera. My inspiration was life itself. Everything that happens in my films is taken from a nearby street or pub. If you feel life, everything is easy. The most important thing is to feel and see. But this is my way – there is no ready-made formula.

Script

I hate to write scripts. I need the script only to submit it to obtain financing. They read the script and think that a good script is a precondition for a good film. You sit at home and print your ideas, write everything in detail, then what? A director selects a location that creates the atmosphere. He invites actors, who add a glance, emotion, character and react to the film. So what you have written on paper does not matter. A situation has to be real, human – describing events that really take place in our life – real images, real emotions. All this is created during the shooting process. You should think of the emotional picture. Your language is an image. There is a structure, which is based on logic. The rest is dictated by location, actors, etc. Sometimes dialogues are based on situation rather than on script. The main thing is to show the audience your vision of the world, to share your emotions and feelings. That's why I don't believe in scripts, which are processed texts; they are textual descriptions of the film. They can be useful, however, for discussing the human situations and scenarios with your partner and co-author.

Actor

When selecting an actor, his/her personality means a lot to me. I wonder what his reaction and emotion will be in a given situation. Everything is dictated by life. The most important thing is to be open to perception and follow your feelings, your inner voice.

Director of photography

I myself see the image entirely, from beginning to end. Therefore I cannot say I give freedom to the director of photography. Yet it is he who holds the camera and is closer to it. In certain cases he feels things better. However, a director of photography, like an actor, expresses feelings, so you, as a director, are responsible.
The Colorfulness of Black and White
When you watch a black-and-white image, you notice, above all, that it is created and not illustrative. We never come across black-and-white images in nature. The less naturalistic an image, the closer it is to art. I don't like "Kodak" technologies, where green is greener and red is brighter, blue is chemical and yellow is awful. In the 80s celluloid technology was replaced by plastic. However, black-and-white technology still retains celluloid. But these are technical isues. The main thing is creative vision – I think black-and-white is closer to art. In my perception, the grey scale is richer, and I prefer this kind of colorfulness.
I like a cinematographic language that is unique, with original vision and attitude. Repetition and copying are inadmissible. What you do should be real, and for this you have to be original. Fortunately, we see different stories told in different languages in different cultures. Films are also made with different budgets. Every director, who sincerely shares his emotions with the audience, is interesting. In this regard I should mention the entire history of cinema – be it Eisenstein, Bresson, Fassbinder, Tarkovsky's Andrey Rubliov, etc. These are unforgettable filmmakers. I like Hitchcock and the way he creates tension and searches for deeper problems through superficial portraits of blond women.
I like films that reflect human character and values. When I came to Georgia in 1978 I watched such films. They were full of life, made with a feeling that life is given to us only once and it is our right to live it better.
Politics affect both film-making and life in general. Should it be reflected in art?
I will once again repeat a statement that led to a scandal – politicians are criminals linked to corruption – some more, others less. Politics is based on power and money. It is a dirty game. Thus, it is not an issue to focus on. We should keep a distance from this theme.

Crisis

I don't see any crisis. Young filmmakers try to find different ways, they make attempts and experiments. We should give them such opportunities and assist them in every possible way. I believe in the future of cinema, in the coming generation and in those generations who created an epoch in filmmaking. A film is not part of show-business. It is an art, which will continue to live and develop. Masterpieces are not frequent, but it does not mean there is a crisis. In every process, something is good and something bad. It has always been like that. Sometimes I think we are still in the Middle Ages – building churches of capitalism – but there are no churches of humanism. The main thing is not to stop! The real crisis occurs when one cannot resist the pressure of the environment and loses faith in a different world. ●

Nuri Bilge Ceylan – The Art of Disguised Feelings

>> Irine Zhordania

I am from a small town where cultural life is not so vibrant. I remember getting a present – a book on photography. This was the start, my first contact with art. My creative life started as I realized I was alien to the world, and cinema became the means of self-expression.
In my first film I shot my family, relatives and friends. I did not know what would come of it. If I considered my work bad, no one would see it. It was a process of first attempts and a creative search. It is very important to find the exact form to express your feelings. If you say things directly, it will seem didactic, so your message should be disguised.
The hardest thing is to understand oneself. Man is lonely by nature. You try to grasp your own feelings and search for the right form to express your emotions and attitude to life. This was the case with Chekhov, who perceived life in a tragic way. His creative works are disguised feelings; his perception of the universe is so tragic that he is frightened. In my opinion, creation was a means to sooth his feelings and it is the same for me – therefore I understand Chekhov well.

Script

It takes a lot of time to develop the script. I don't write structured scripts and don't follow a certain plan. Probably this complicates the process of writing, yet this is my way. In the work process I change a lot of things and feel it's an endless process, which is why things change in the process of shooting and editing. Sometimes I shoot two radically different versions of the same scene, and in the process of editing I decide which version expresses my feelings in a better way.

Actors

If there are detailed dialogues in the script, it's better to work with professional actors, as they are better at bringing words into "action"; they can add life to words and express them the way you want. A non-professional actor can also cope with a dialogue, but in this case you have to create the appropriate situation. This is a generalization, however. Personally I am more interested in details, even in the case of dialogue, as the most interesting is hidden beyond words.

Music

I am not against music in a film, although I rarely use it. In my opinion, a musical background diminishes the significance of scenes. I know the majority of spectators do not agree with this. The audience is excited by background music; if the main characters cry and this is accompanied by good music, the audience weeps too. In my films I try to achieve that degree of sensitivity without music, although – I repeat – the audience thinks otherwise. I am alien to society and so are my films. There are thousands of sounds around us, and I select these for my films as I want the audience to hear these sounds. Yet sound editing in my films is less realistic than image editing, as I attach more importance to realistic images.

Universal Art

Certainly, many important things are lost in translation, but the essential message is still clear. I often wonder how a person with a totally different cultural background and lifestyle can grasp your message – be it the subject line or the dialogues in the film. This is a mysterious phenomenon which makes a work of art universal. For example, Dostoevsky's novels are very Russian, yet comprehensible and close to everyone. In Iranian films the dialogues and subject matter reflect national features and traditions; however international audiences still feel the key messages of the films. It would be a restriction if I thought about the wider audience's reactions to my films during the work process, even if they are created within Turkish culture. Certainly, some specifics are comprehensible only in the original language. I don't know what makes a work of art universal – common human values perhaps. ●

"You Should Change the World!"

Mohsen Mahmalbaf

>> Irine Zhordania

Famous Iranian writer and film director, well known in contemporary Iran, Mohsen Mahmalbaf, has developed a film language everyone can understand, an original way of seeing common problems and a special talent for bringing his ideas to the audience. His works are listed as some of the top one hundred films. Although they are prohibited in his native country, his films attract great interest outside of Iran.

Masterclass

The Gardener

The government of Iran has prohibited The Gardener, although it seems thousands of copies have been sold on the black market. The film was shot in Israel but according to Iranian law, a trip to Israel is subject to five years imprisonment. It is also banned to talk about Baha'I, and its adepts have been banished from Iran.

The film was made with two cameras and a low budget. We edited it on our own laptops using the "Final cut" program. I would like to advise young filmmakers to learn how to use this program, because it simplifies editing. I also advise them to shoot using small cameras and not RED, which has a format like a 35 mm camera and is difficult for one person to handle. The 5 D camera is difficult to focus in motion and an assistant is needed. This camera is good for photography. When you shoot a documentary, it is better not to attract attention, so with a small camera, if you remove the lens, it's hardly larger than a mobile phone.

We divided the filming into two stages. Having spent a fortnight in Israel, we came back and watched all the material, edited it and traveled to Israel again for three weeks, adding what we needed. We did not get official permission to film in Israel. We walked the city as tourists, trying to stay unnoticed. I think this film is a good example of how to make a film easily and yet manage to share your ideas with the audience.

Of the three cameras you see in the film, only two are actually turned on. When the third camera starts working, one of the other two turns off. A camera like this costs about 2000 USD, is much cheaper to buy than to rent a RED. The total cost of the equipment – two cameras and microphones – did not exceed 5000 USD.

Photo: Zinka Barnovi

We had a large professional microphone, but recorded sound using a so-called "buttonhole" microphone. We stood opposite each other in the frames. Certainly, we had pre-planned parts, but mostly we shot what happened spontaneously.

There are three voices in the film: Dialogue between two generations – my son represents the younger generation which hates every religion and thinks religion destroys the world; I represented the older generation, and another I, as a director, was behind the camera. Like this we wanted to achieve democracy within the film. In most films there is one vision and one viewpoint, but here I tried to achieve three angles.

How to shoot a film...

Today technology is not so important. A camera can turn into a pen. A writer first creates a novel and then looks for a publisher. Who is a writer? – A person who writes. And who is a film director? - A person who makes films. If you are a director, try to shoot with a simple camera and then try to sell the film. When a director says he has lots of ideas but lacks money, this is not directing, it's begging.

Ten years ago when I was shooting a film, my equipment weighed 250 kg. Now all the equipment weighs about 20 kg. Small lights are enough – even inside, just a few bulbs are sufficient. Shoot as simply as you can! Why do I insist on this? Because lots of people tell me they love film-making but cannot obtain financing.

If you have a passion, you'll find a way to share your pain with others. Start working and shoot, even with your mobile phone. After the digital revolution film-making is like writing a novel. Fortunately, today there is no need for a producer that controls you to make a profit. There's no censorship – we went to Israel and shot a film in a way that no one even noticed it. That's why I call the process a digital revolution – the power of a producer's money is undermined and the force of censorship is also destroyed.

Even though formerly it took thirty people to make a film, now you can shoot alone, in other words implement your ideas on your own. Author's films make this possible today.

Cinema can change reality!

I watched ten films in the competition of Tbilisi International Festival, all of them first and second films by the directors. All of them were better than my first film. This is the case when a director has sufficient knowledge, education, technical skills, and a sense of style. However, the majority of these films had one problem – the story.

Cinema is much more powerful than governments. People can replace governments, but dictatorships have their roots in culture, so only culture can influence things. There's no point in changing this or that president. The main thing is to influence human mentalities, and above all this is related to ideas. There is one more problem with these films – repetition. Most films presented resemble something we have already seen. Thus, it is vital to find your own story and tell it in your own way.

I remember it took me a week to make a film called Afghan Alphabet, then we edited the film in a week. It was about 700, 000 Afghan refugee children in Iran. In two towns there were over 100, 000 refugee children. For eight years, they had had no opportunity to go to school and the Government saw them as stateless immigrants, without visas. We made a film about these children and showed their pains, wishes and dreams. We showed the film to ministers and members of Parliament. And this documentary film changed the law – one day half a million children started school.

Young filmmakers who had studied for four years in an Indian University were depressed—each of them thought he was as talented as Fellini, but nobody cared about him. They couldn't get the millions they thought were necessary to shoot a film. The street adjacent to the University was one of the dirtiest places in India, full of scattered rubbish and begging children. I advised these young directors to take hand cameras and walk out into the streets. The question they were to ask the children was: "Would you stop begging if they paid you five dollars a day for cleaning the streets?" It did not matter what the children answered. After this, the young directors had to go to the owners of shops and ask them if they would pay the children 5 dollars for cleaning the streets. The directors had to record all the conversations, even arguments with the police. In a short while, these directors saw clean streets and they realized that this initiative had turned into a movement. It is better to be a person who cleans beautiful India from rubbish than a young depressed "Fellini"! The themes for your films can be found around you – believe me, you can do it. You can change culture, tradition and politics. We have the power to change the world!

My films are not made for applause. It's a disgrace when they throw stones at a 16-year-old girl in Iran or when the government kills Bahaists... In old times God meant morality in my country, while today the name of God is associated with arrests, torture and rape. It is our obligation to do something for suffering and oppressed people, whether in our countries or elsewhere.

We made three films in Afghanistan. About three thousand children were begging in the streets of Kabul and one dollar was worth about fifty "Afghans". The children asked for one Afghan. We allocated a certain amount from the film budget and selected talented children. Fourteen of them could paint. We bought them colored pencils and promised we would sell the best paintings. We collected one hundred sixty-eight pictures and organized an exhibition. The hall was dark; each child held a torch, stood by his painting and told about his art. A year ago all these children were beggars...

Don't tell me such acts are not the responsibility of filmmakers. There is a widely used term, "reality cinema". In fact cinema is powerful enough to change reality! ●

"There Are No rules" Phedon Papamichael

>> Ketevan Giorgobiani

Papamichael – the pronunciation of this surname varies in accordance with his location—had a German mother and a Greek father. He was brought up within European traditions, yet his career is connected to Hollywood, where he works both as film director and director of photography.

Most readers will better remember his films than his name: a famous romantic comedy of the 90s, While You Were Sleeping (with Sandra Bullock), Wim Wenders' world-famous Million Dollar Hotel, Nana Jorjadze's 27 Lost Kisses, the recent comic blockbuster Knight & Day with Tom Cruise and Cameron Dias, and a low-budget film Ten Items Or Less with Morgan Freeman. This is a short list of films where Phedon Papamichael was director of photography.

He also makes commercials, for example ads for BMW, VW, AUDI, SEAT, CADILLAC, NISSAN, HYUNDAI, RENAULT, FUJI, BARILLA, McDONALDS, BECK'S, GOODYEAR, MILKA, NESSPRESSO etc. Several years ago he created a commercial for the Georgian architectural company Axis.

You work on feature films as well as musical and commercial clips. What are the main differences in the specifics of these genres?

P.P.: Working on a film is much more difficult – it takes months. It is hard to achieve any "uniform visual consistence" when the same story is told for such a long period. This is a challenge and creates pressure. I often combine working on commercials with travel and vacation, as these shootings take only two or three days.

All great filmmakers have their own ways of achieving the desired results. Vittorio Storaro says he achieves perfect image by using colours. Critics assess your direction of photography as "painting" and "imagery". How do you evaluate it yourself?

P.P.: It'ss impossible to identify my work. Certainly, Storaro is a great master, but as soon as you start watching a film, you immediately guess it's his work. His style is very specific, which is justified in many cases, but sometimes it spoils the film, as the direction of photography is much stronger than the direction of the film itself, so it overshadows the story.

I try to achieve a plain visual image. Every story needs a specific interpretation and attitude. When people watch my films, they never say: "This is Papamichael's style". For instance, Million Dollar Hotel looks like Wim Wenders' film and is totally different from Nana Jorjadze's 27 Lost Kisses although I was director of photography in both. Thus the main thing for me is to interpret a concrete story told by the director rather than mark the film with my style. I try to tell the story the best way and adjust the image to the mood of the film.

You are well acquainted with Georgian films. Have you noticed any progress?

In Georgia there is individuality which is very important. Certainly we should constantly try to improve the system, and this process is under way in Georgia

P.P.: More young people are involved in the process. I feel there's an interest in the films. What you lack is structure and organization, as well as certain insignificant details that can be improved very easily. Shooting is, above all, a system that should be established as it is in Hollywood. However, I don't mean that Hollywood is the best example of filmmaking. Here in Georgia there is more creative freedom, but in Hollywood they have perfect structure which is passed from generation to generation. In Georgia there is individuality which is very important. Certainly we should constantly try to improve the system, and this process is under way in Georgia. Georgian films are very emotional and visually attractive; the stories are also very interesting. There is no problem on the creative side. However, the young generation needs to gain experience.

You started your career with documentary photography. Please tell us about that time.
PP: That's true. But I also started film photography at a young age. At 23 I was already working in films, but I didn't graduate from any film school. I learnt the profession while making short films with my friends.

So you think practice is the main thing?
P.P.: Yes. Simply, I saw a lot of things, shot many films and worked hard.

In one interview you said that in photography an artist is lonely. What did you mean? How do you evaluate the profession of director of photography?
P.P.: Photography is like painting – it's just you and your camera. With films, I like cooperation, as films are not made by one person. This is more attractive than working alone.

Many filmmakers pay attention to the development of photography. Frequently, surprising as it may seem, documentary photography influences the visual side of feature films.
P.P.: I agree with you. Feature films are influenced not only by documentary photography but also by the aesthetics of documentary films. Today there's a tendency to shoot with a hand camera. For instance, Mexicans use this method in their "new wave"; Europeans also use it like in Dogma. They shoot films with a video camera, and like that they add more naturalism and energy to the composition. This is fashionable, although I think there will always be classical cinema. The classical style is much closer to me than the modern one. To sum up, there are different languages for different stories. For instance, what David Lynch did in the case of Lawrence of Arabia was an ideal language for the given film, but this is not an ideal language for cinema in general. There are no rules as such, and a language should be selected that's based on the emotional side of a concrete film.

Currently video and film aesthetics are mixed. Films are made with the equipment meant for television and vice versa. You shoot TV commercials with film, whereas some directors use television equipment to make feature films.
P.P.: The key reason for this is to save money. Certainly the quality of products that are shot on film is better, but this is not necessary for soap operas. Video equipment is quite sufficient in this case. The short duration of commercial clips makes it possible to use film.

Most filmmakers think that television has affected cinema and that the above-mentioned mixture leads to a complete catastrophe. What do you think?
P.P.: I don't see any essential difference. The main thing is to achieve the desired result. Most spectators don't notice the difference. With commercial clips, only professionals are able to notice the difference. In films this is more obvious. However, if the desired result is achieved and the story is told well, it doesn't matter whether the story is shot on film or with high quality digital equipment.

New ways of shooting will always develop but many people will remain faithful to traditional techniques. Despite the achievements of the 21st century, some directors still make black-and-white films, like Jim Jarmusch. So I don't think classic methods will ever be forgotten.

What about independent filmmaking such as Sideways or Little Miss Sunshine. Do you think this direction has more potential in Georgia than mega projects?
P.P.: Minor production does not always mean it's an independent film. The main thing is to have good material – scripts, stories, directors. For instance, there is a marvelous German film called Somebody Else's Life. Such films don't need an expensive technical or material foundation and can easily be made in Georgia. ●

INDUSTRY TODAY

Project Market in Tbilisi

>> Andrea Wink

Andrea Wink is director of Exground Filmfest (an independent festival in Wiesbaden, Germany); Head of goEast (Film Festival in Wiesbaden, Germany) student competition; Coordinator of goEast - Young Professionals Training Program and project market for young directors from Germany, Central and Eastern Europe. Since 2008 Andrea Wink has worked for the Robert Bosch Stiftung Co-production Prize, arranges individual meetings for German producers and participants of the Sarajevo Talent Campus, establishes links between participants of Sofia Meetings and the Tbilisi Project Market, consults for talented young filmmakers on project pitching…This year Andrea Wink carried out trainings within the Tbilisi Project Market.

In July 2011 the first joint project of GNFC and Robert Bosch Stiftung was implemented in Tbilisi. Young filmmakers had an opportunity to participate in business meetings with German producers and to implement projects at the international level. Cooperation has continued within Project Market Tbilisi – this year a three-day workshop was held on July 24- 27 when German producers met young filmmakers from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Young Caucasian filmmakers became acquainted with issues related to international co-production. A training on project pitching focused on how to express one's idea briefly within a given time limit, and how to foster the interest of potential partners. They made their firts steps to apply for the Robert Bosch Stiftung Coproduction Prize.

Robert Bosch Stiftung – one Germany's most significant foundations – was established in 1964, and is linked to Robert Bosch GmbH, which controls a major portion of the assets. The Foundation shares Robert Bosch's, the company's founder's, philanthropic vision. It implements numerous projects in health protection, education, and support for talented youth and international cooperation. The projects are implemented in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. The Robert Bosch Stiftung allocates three coproduction prizes for young German and Eastern-European filmmakers. The 70,000 Euro prize for each project is awarded for animation, documentary and short films.

This year 12 projects participated in Project Market Tbilisi. Out of these, two were from Azerbaijan, two from Armenia and eight from Georgia.

After Project Market Tbilisi was over, I talked to a German producer, Caroline Reninger, who is a producer at Zero One Film which develops television and documentary films. In 2008 she established a company called Joon Film, which focuses on experimental cinema.

FP: Why did you participate in Project Market Tbilisi?

C.R.: My aim was to meet directors and producers from this region, which is still little known in Europe. A trip to Georgia within the Robert Bosch Project Market is a unique opportunity for establishing long-term relationships.

FP: Were your expectations met?

C.R. I really looked forward to this meeting. I wanted to learn about financing and coproduction opportunities in the region. Yes, my expectations were met: the meetings were successful because we discussed projects from the viewpoint of cinematic attitudes, development, creative production, financing and coproduction. I met directors who have interesting ideas, although the majority of projects are still at the early stage of development. Therefore, I am not sure whether I will apply for a coproduction prize this year, although this seems quite realistic in future. There are more coproduction opportunities for young and talented directors. Georgian directors focus on issues that will surely arouse the interest of foreign audiences. Therefore, I hope their projects will draw the attention of co-producers not only from Germany, but also from other European countries. ●

Three Hot Summer Days

>> Irma Janjgava

"Teaching is my hobby; I enjoy sharing my experience with others". With these words Jan Tillges, Head of studies of Mini Eave Producers Training, addressed the audience.

Mini Eave training is an event that was organized by the Georgian National Film Center. The training was devoted to script development, and as the Georgian National Film Center declared the year 2012 as the year of script development, many activities are being carried out to this end, including the Mini Eave courses, script development grants and an annual competition "gala" to award prizes for the Best Script of the Year. All these events are aimed at increasing the quality of scripts for the coproduction markets in future.

This article focuses on the training given by the representatives of Mini-Eave, its meaning and the expected results of the workshops. Let's start by explaining the importance of similar workshops:

Training is based on the necessity for script development as an important stage in the film production process. It is obvious that script development should be first in this process, and without it, the Georgian film industry cannot develop. Instead of focusing on the technical training, we will tell about the trainers themselves.

Jani Tillges (Luxembourg) – Head of Studies /Producers' Tutor – Tillges is a member of the European Film Academy, Chairman and Leader of the EAVE Group. Since 2012 he has been Head of Studies of EAVE European Producers Training. In 2007, Le Film Francais named him one of the best producers in France.

Jacques Achote (France) –script development consultant—Achote has cooperated with famous directors like Lars von Trier and Robert Bresson. He is the author of the script of Marina de Van's Don't Look Back, which was a participant of the official program of the Cannes Festival in 2009, starring Sophie Marceau and Monica Belucci.

Participants of the training were selected on the basis of a competition. The following five projects were selected:

• Rusudan Chkonia and Tinatin Chkonia, project Come Home, Sun
• Nana Janelidze and Ekaterine Jojua, project The Other Paradise
• Levan Pirtskhalava and Mari Chachua, project Ideal Beauties
• Uta Beria and Zaza Rusadze, project Negative Numbers
• Nene Kvinikadze and Keti Machavariani, project Hands Up

We talked to Jani Tillges and Jacques Achote to have their impressions of the three-day workshop and its participants.

What is your overall impression of the selected projects?

Jani Tillges: Our aim is to assist Georgian filmmakers in project develop-

Georgian
National Film
Center
Jani Thiltges

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ment, which involves all stages of the movie. So far, it is difficult to assess their complete potential and say which project will achieve the final stage. The projects submitted for the training are now at different stages of development.

Were there problems that hampered your work with your Georgian colleagues?
Jani Tillges: In some cases, problems were caused by insufficient knowledge of English.

What are the peculiarities of the Georgian film industry?
Jani Tillges: The most important thing is that there seems to be a demand for professional producers. The understanding of a producer's role in the West differs from the Georgian attitude, which is not surprising. Several years ago the situation was the same in my country, Luxembourg. A producer's profession is largely based on experience and talent. One also has to know how the system works today, and much depends on contacts and communicative skills. Recent developments in the film industry have led to a demand for lawyers working in the film field. The Georgian National Film Center can assist companies in this regard, for example by putting contract samples on its website, which will assist production companies to draw up their contracts.

The major weakness of the Georgian film industry is a lack of films. A director who creates one film in five years is in difficult professional conditions. In five years they can forget everything – what was he doing and how? Despite the efforts of the Film Center, financing is scarce here. If we assess things realistically, we see that the budget allocated for the production of several films is hardly enough even for one film. Therefore, investments should be attracted from abroad. In this regard, it is important to make political decisions and to consider how important it is for the country to develop film industry. The involvement of television channels and advertising companies in film financing is also very important.

What is the film about? Who is the main character? How do his actions correspond to his character? Georgian writers and producers discussed these issues with their mentors.

What is the most important in script-writing?
Jacques Achote: A writer should be confident about what he is saying and a script-writer is evaluated by his ability to tell a story in a realistic way.

When organizing the training it was hard to form teams of writers and producers. How does this work in other countries?
Jacques Achote: The situation is identical, with similar issues in every country.

Events that encourage script-writers are very important. In Georgia, script-writers find it hard to survive, but probably this is not only our problem...
Jacques Achote: I agree. This is a universal problem.

The participants of the training also expressed their opinions about the workshop:
Uta Beria: The initiative of the Georgian National Film Center to support script development is very timely and important because current Georgian filmmaking suffers serious problems with regard to dramaturgy. Film dramaturgy is partly a technical field, so I think similar workshops will bring significant results and will be favourable for further development of the Georgian film industry. The participants of the workshop tried to develop the dramaturgy of their scripts. I participated with a project of a full length feature film Negative Numbers.

The experts analysed our projects, gave us useful advice and shared their experience. Script development consultant Jacques Achote defined the problems of my script very precisely and explained technical ways to improve it. The participants of the training exchanged opinions about scripts. I think it is interesting to hear somebody else's opinion about your script. You discover many shortcomings, and hearing other people's attitudes helps you create an imaginary distance from your script.

Nene Kvinikadze: Story-telling is important. How should I generalize what I want to tell? How should I go beyond this narrow market and make the fruit of my work comprehensible to those in other cultures?! Jacques Achote and Jan Tillges asked questions directly, pointed out the unpersuasive moments and told us when they failed to see the main characters. Group work and individual meetings helped identify strengths and weaknesses. The three days of the first part of the workshop were enough to make us ask questions about our own scripts: is the main character interesting? Are his goals and challenges realistic, and, in general, what story am I telling?

The second part of the workshop is planned for October. By that time participants have to submit "step outlines" (scripts without dialogues). We will learn how to persuade the world that we also have our stories and – what's most important – we are capable of telling these stories well.

Zaza Rusadze: The introduction of Western industrial models in local film producton is a precondition for the success of Georgian films abroad. The creative union of a director, script writer and producer should generate the ideas jointly. Interesting stories should be born within Georgian culture and in the context of contemporary filmmaking, not based on the demands of the Western film market. I hope the unique nature of our films will be enhanced by such quality international training programs and that Georgia will join the world film industry as a competitive player.

Nana Janelidze: The training offered by GNFC and EAVE was very important for me. In the past, for a project to be approved by a Georgian film studio, it had to be presented to the creative council where film directors, writers and editors became acquainted with the project. They assessed it critically, made comments and sometimes returned the project to the author for reworking. If this procedure was passed successfully, the same procedure awaited you at the Chief Creative Council of the film studio. The creative council consisted of professionals like Rezo Chkheidze, Tenghiz Abuladze, Lana Ghoghoberidze, Nana Mchedlidze, Eldar Shengelaya, Chabua Amirejibi, Rezo Tabukashvili, Niko Chavchavadze, Irakli Abashidze, Nodar Dumbadze, Akaki Bakradze, Giorgi Shengelaya, Nodar Mamisashvili, Erlom Akhvlediani, Niko Kiasashvili, Boris Paichadze, Vazha Gigashvili, and many others... Thus, the intellectual and creative elite of the country took part in the processes related to filmmaking. For a small country like Georgia, film production is a matter of national importance. Film production is related to huge financial investments, which are beyond the creative potential and competence of a few people. In present-day Georgia there are no professional creative councils of filmmakers. Currently the film infrastructure has changed, and the script-writer and director remain isolated, therefore the professional discussions arranged by GNFC and EAVE were very important. The workshop was given by European film professionals, but it was also very important that Georgian filmmakers also participated in the discussions. Everyone considered themselves responsible for the development of every project. Even if only one project participating in this training becomes a good film, we should consider this initiative successful.

Levan Pirtskhalava: The opportunity to participate in GNFC and EAVE script development training with my first project was a great stimulus for me and helped me make some decisions. Participation in the training made me hope there are people who have noticed in me something that I call "magic". This is great responsibility, and I feel honoured to have spent these three days with the other participants.

There is still a lot for the participants of the training to do: an online session will be held when all projects have to present a step-outline, or a script without dialogues, and a subsequent session will be held where authors will present the first drafts of their scripts. ●

Tamara Tatishvili;
Nikoloz Khomasuridze,
Ketevan Machavariani
and Lasha Khalvashi;
Sandro Jandieri;
Salome Jashi

Locarno - focus on Caucasus

>> Ketevan Machavariani

A small town near the Swiss Alps turns into a hotspot for filmmakers every August. In 2013 the film festival of Locarno will be held for the 66th time.

The Festival's industrial platform, called "Open Doors" is attended each year by around sixty producers looking for interesting projects. This platform is supported by SDC (Swiss Development and Cooperation), a federal agency for development under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The authors of 12 selected projects present their plans and the best one is awarded 40,000 Euros (First Prize). The second and third places receive Arte and CNC awards. This year Open Doors will focus on the South Caucasus. Thus, in order to become acquainted with the local film industry, in early November the Head of Open Doors, Martina Malacrida, and the Festival's Consultant and Regional Expert, Joel Chapron, came to Tbilisi. The Georgian National Film Center organized a meeting between the Swiss guests and Georgian directors and producers. The guests presented the Locarno program and conditions for participation. Martina Malacrida talked to Film Print about the details.

Why is Open Doors focusing on the South Caucasus this year? Where did the idea come from? To my knowledge, in previous years the regions within your focus were Central Asia, Cuba and India.

M.M.: I became the Head of the Open Doors Section in 2010. Joel Chapron and I immediately decided to focus on Central Asia. This was the right decision. The atmosphere was marvelous, and I learned a lot about the region. In 2011 the focus was India, then we moved to Africa for 2012. So now is the perfect time to focus on the Caucasus.

In 1993 Dito Tsintsadze's film On the Borderline was awarded a "Silver Leopard" in Locarno. His other film The Man from the Embassy was also nominated for the Festival. Have you heard of other Georgian authors?

M.M.: I don't know much about Georgian films and directors yet as I have just started collecting information, reading, watching films etc. Since I'm a newcomer to the region, Joel accompanies me, as he is quite familiar with the region.

What can we expect will happen within this Open Doors program for Georgia, along with Armenia and Azerbaijan?

M.M.: As a rule, after Open Doors meetings there are three or four projects that find a co-producer. The following three or four years we observe the development of the project and the film's career. If a film is finished, it can then participate in the competition of the Locarno Festival or other festival.

Do you think the producers who visit Open Doors will be interested in projects from the South Caucasus?

M.M.: Every year we try to invite the best producers to attend our program, although due to the economic crisis, film production is difficult now and co-production is even more so. However, I know for sure that many West European and East European producers will be interested in the South Caucasus. We should consider that the Caucasus is much closer to Europe than to Africa. The most important and difficult thing now is to discover and select good projects. Producers concentrate more on how good a project is rather than what region it's from.

Soon the selection stage will be over, and in April the results will be publicized. Our brochures will be distributed during the Cannes Festival to attract the attention of producers for Open Doors. We have followed this strategy for three years. After this, the producers have three months to select the project they are interested in. Selected participants take a two-day course on project presentation.

I think it is a very useful platform for beginning cineastes. Even if you fail to find a co-producer in Locarno, it's a place to establish contacts. The projects presented may fail to attract the attention of producers, but they might draw the producer's attention to some other project you have. Locarno is a good meeting place, unlike Cannes, where arranging a meeting is extremely difficult. In Locarno it's a small town and easy to meet people. Thus, we expect you in Locarno and the Doors are Open! ●

Sarajevo Film Festival

Photo: Zinka Barnovi

Sarajevo, An Unforgettable Experience

>> Natia Nikolashvili

For 18 years a film festival has been held in Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Festival embraces several programs – the Sarajevo Talent Campus, CineLink and Work in Progress.

I was lucky to attend this wonderful Festival in 2011. That year a delegation from the Georgian National Film Center represented Georgia, to enable Georgian filmmakers to become acquainted and participate in this festival in the future.

Bosnia is stunningly beautiful, perhaps because of its mountains, but also for the hospitality of local people that made me feel at home. At first it was hard to believe this Festival is one of the leading film events worldwide, as there are no boundaries between world-famous directors and young filmmakers. Without any restrictions, we can have tea with Charlotte Gainsbourg, discuss plans and ideas with Jeremy Irons and unexpectedly run into Morgan Freeman. The environment in the Sarajevo Festival makes everyone feel important, yet people don't go to relax in comfort or show off. Here everyone is united by a love of cinema. The guests of the Sarajevo Festival share the friendly and hospitable atmosphere created by the organizers and staff.

This year, the Director of the Sarajevo Film Festival, Mirsad Purivatra; the Head of the Industrial Section, Jovan Marjanovic; and Industrial Projects Manager, Ena Dozo, visited Tbilisi. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to meet with Mirsad Purivatra and discuss the Sarajevo Festival.

Why are the Sarajevo Film Festival organizers interested in Georgia?

M.P.: We made friends with the Georgian National Film Center and discovered the country's ancient history and talented people. I think Bosnia and Georgia have much in common. Besides, it is important for Georgian filmmakers to participate in our festival in order to establish themselves within the European film market. Georgia will enrich our Festival by introducing many talented artists who have interesting stories to tell. This will be "fresh air", in film language and aesthetics, on the European map. I think the projects presented by Georgian filmmakers at the Sarajevo Talent Campus in the past two years have been really impressive.

What are the opportunities for Georgian filmmakers at Sarajevo Film Festival?

M.P.: There are several opportunities, such as the Sarajevo Talent Campus for students and young filmmakers. They have a chance to attend eight days of training, lectures and workshops by

Jovan Marjanovic, Tamara Tatishvili, Mirsad Purivatra and Ena Dozo; Tamara Tatishvili; Mariam Kandelaki; Nato Sharabidze, Beso Odisharia and Irma Janjgava; Salome Sepashvili, Mirsad Purivatra and Jovan Marjanovic; Ketevan Machavariani and Ena Dozo.

leading European and non-European filmmakers. The Sarajevo City of Film is a project that enables filmmakers to register and make a short professional film. This is important for their experience and future career.

The project CineLink allows Georgian filmmakers to submit feature film projects, develop and present their scripts, all within the Festival, to meet partners and producers from various regions and discuss co-production and financing opportunities.

Finally, everyone has an opportunity to submit films for participation in the competition, because Georgia is already on the participant list. Georgian filmmakers can attend the festival, win awards and walk up the Red Carpet, which is definitely a significant step in their career.

Why should young filmmakers participate in the Sarajevo Talent Campus?

M.P.: There are several reasons. They undergo eight days of training and attend lectures and workshops by famous filmmakers and experts. It should be emphasized that the methods used in these trainings are different from those in Georgia, which is an advantage. This is also an opportunity to meet filmmakers from other countries. Everyone knows that we are unable to produce films with our own resources so it is crucial to find partners. Our aim is to encourage this type of networking. Besides seasoned filmmakers, young filmmakers have an opportunity to meet famous professionals like film stars, producers and representatives of major production companies. For example, due to this program, stars like Juliette Binoche, Jeremy Irons and Kevin Spacey have agreed to participate in films from the region, so this is a rare chance to make contacts with world-famous stars.

What plans have you made jointly with GNFC so far?

M.P.: The first step is to encourage Georgian filmmakers to send their projects and data to these various sections and to join us at the Sarajevo Film Festival. We would like to cooperate and see whether joint productions between Georgia and our region are possible. Some themes of recent Georgian films raise problems similar to those Bosnia has suffered from and I think co-production is possible. It would be interesting to see how we can collaborate.

We said goodbye to Mirsad and thanked him for his visit. I again realized that the greatest charm lies in openness and devotion to one's work, and would like to advise all film directors, producers and actors to participate in the unique Sarajevo Film Festival. ●

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Film Commission Georgia is now offering its large database of local filmmakers. We can be your guide to filmmaking in Georgia:

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- We can be your local resource to access locations, production companies and crews across the country
- We can introduce you to the country, its people and specific key locations according to your needs
- We can provide information on local filmmaking conditions and defend your interests before the relevant authorities

We can offer a wide range of services, and show almost all resources you'll need within a four-hour drive from the capital, Tbilisi. In summer you can swim in a resort on the Black Sea coast and ski in the Caucasus Mountains.

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